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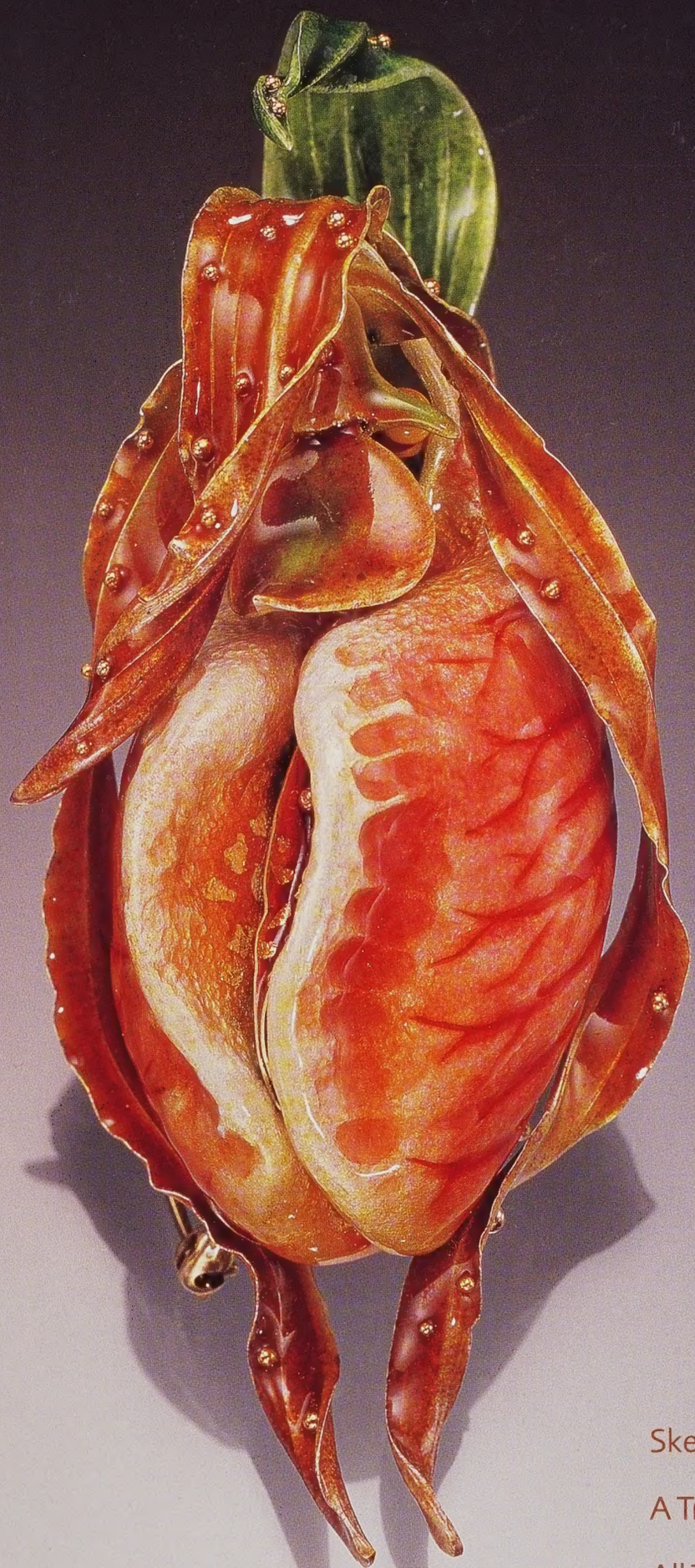
FALL 2003



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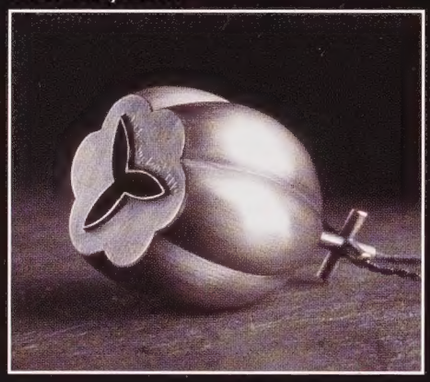
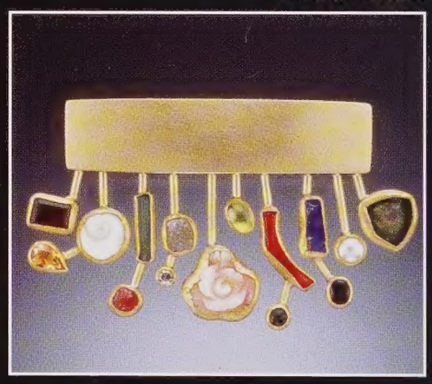
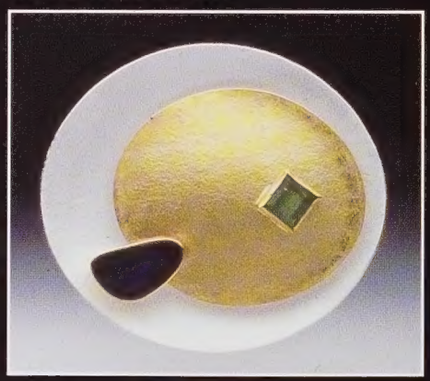


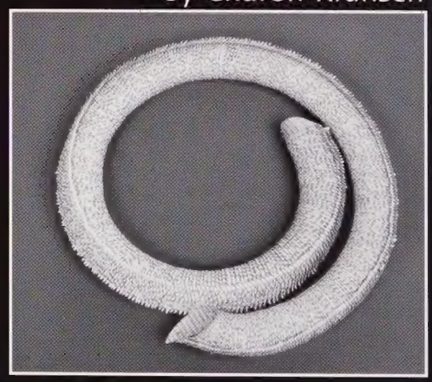
Petra Class



Clara Ines Arana



International Artists- Curated by Charon Kransen



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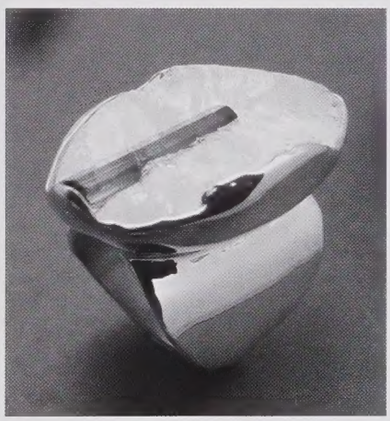

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Stanley Lechtzin; Torque. 1971; Silver and polyester resin
Photo Credit: Thomas DuBrock

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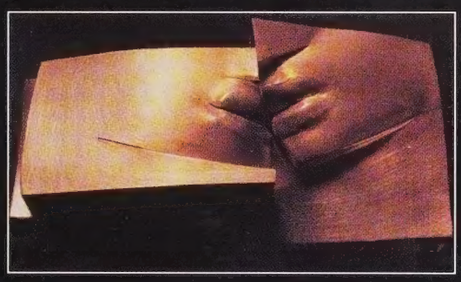

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METALSMITH VOL 23 NO 5

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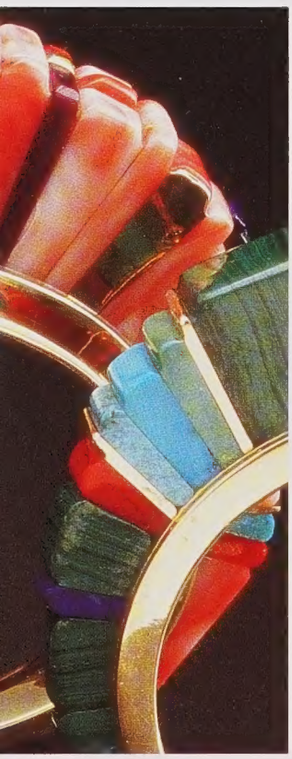

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counterclockwise from top
David Freda
Study of Carnivorous Pitcher Plant (sculpture), 2001
24k and 18k yellow gold, fine silver, brass, copper, enamel
7 x 7 x 7"
Photo: Barry Blau

Verma Nequatewa
Three Bracelets, mid-1990s
18k gold, coral, sugulite, turquoise, lapis lazuli, malachite, serpentine, fossilized ivory, teak, ebony, onyx
width 3"

Samuel Yellin
Iron Sketch, 1930s
forged wrought iron
9 x 15 x 1"

cover
David Freda
Pink Lady Slipper (brooch), 2003
fine silver, 24k, 18k, 14k yellow gold, enamel, pearl
3 x 1/4 x 1 x 1 1/4"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

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Manzanita Earrings and Wide Pebble Bold Ring – Blackened Steel, White Gold and White Diamonds Photo – William Dobbs

FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

The literary critic Harold Bloom famously coined the phrase "anxiety of influence" to capture the uneasy relationship many artists have with their precursors. A desire to stake out original territory and protect oneself against heavy influence has spurred many artists to transcend their forerunners' creative work. The sticky but rich relationship between individual makers and their debt to tradition emerges as a recurring theme in this issue of *Metalsmith*, and many of the featured artists reveal a potent engagement with past figures or styles.

The art of David Freda (on our cover) has been shaped through intense relations with his predecessors. While in college during the late 1970s, Freda fell under the sway of Albert Paley's work and entered his "Paley phase," characterized by baroque sinuousness. Freda gradually shed this early influence and began to cultivate his personal passion for the natural world. More recently, he has become ensnared by the legacy of René Lalique. Upon seeing a museum exhibition of the master's metalwork, Freda vowed to "pick up where Lalique left off"— a self-imposed challenge that has led to a series of orchids that may very well surpass the earlier artist's achievement.

Tradition serves as both source and departure point for the Native American metalsmiths discussed in "A Tradition of Change." While steeped in historic Southwestern silverwork, these artists have nonetheless found ways of incorporating non-indigenous content or techniques into their work. The resulting objects simultaneously honor their makers' cultural heritage while revealing much conceptual and technical innovation.

The early-twentieth-century blacksmith, Samuel Yellin, turned to the past for inspiration as he sought to single-handedly restore the declining art of wrought iron. As Anna Fariello recounts, when Yellin opened his shop in 1909 the craft of blacksmithing was nearly extinct, supplanted by the modern technique of cast iron. Yellin's study of traditional ironwork helped to revive this moribund art form and earned him the status of blacksmith "without peer."

A preservationist impulse is also behind the silversmithing of Jeffrey Herman, the subject of this issue's "Studio Visit." In addition to creating his own original designs, Herman works as a conservator to repair and restore historical metalwork. His job requires that he remain deferential to the original smiths' vision and insure that their influence survives to be reckoned with for years to come...

SR

METALSMITH

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designers and metalsmiths

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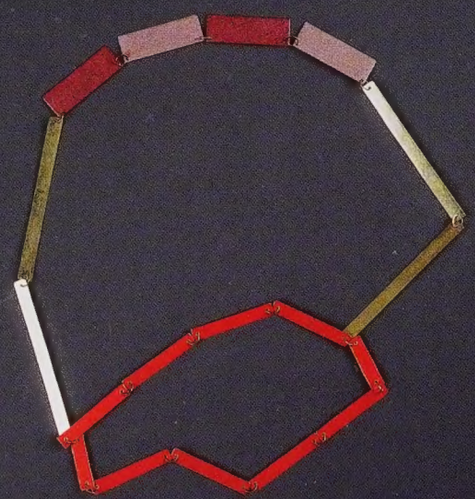

Annelies Planteydt, necklace gold, titamium, orange, red
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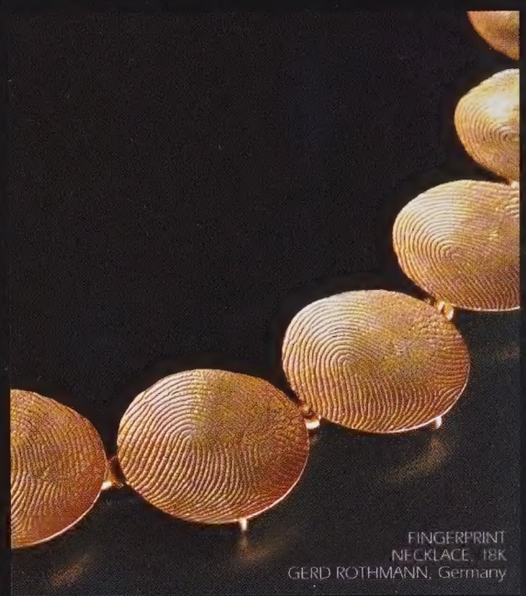

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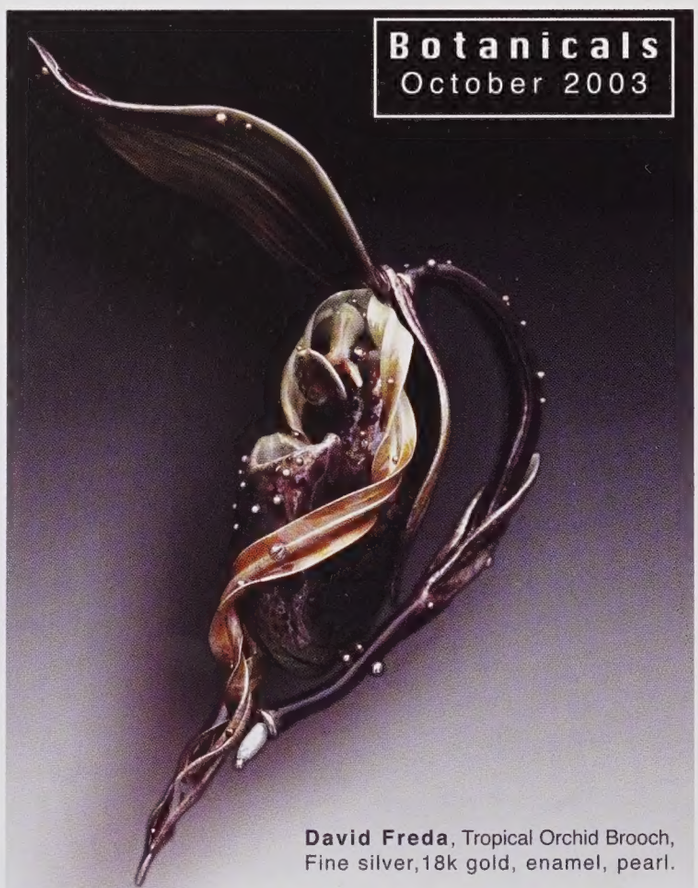

David Freda, Tropical Orchid Brooch,
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METALSMITH

EXHIBITION IN PRINT 2004

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Metalsmith, the award-winning publication of the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG), the organization for jewelers, designers, and metalsmiths, is soliciting slides of recent work in metalsmithing and jewelry to be juried for inclusion in its annual Fall publication, "Exhibition in Print."

Approximately 40 artists will be selected for the publication, which will include four-color reproductions of artists' work, as well as statements and biographical information. A round-table discussion with jurors Sharon Church, Bruce Pepich and James Wallace on collecting, museums, and the metalsmithing market will also be featured. The discussion will be introduced and moderated by Mary Douglas, a writer, metalsmith, and current curator of collections and exhibitions at the Southern Highland Crafts Guild in Asheville, NC.

All jewelers, designers and metalsmiths, including students, are eligible and encouraged to apply and need not reside in the United States. All work must be original and produced within the last two years (2002 or later). Artists featured in the *juried* "Exhibition in Print 2002" are *not* eligible to enter the 2004 competition.

The entry fee, made payable to SNAG in U.S. funds, is $20 for SNAG members and $30 for non-members. To become a member of SNAG, please see entry form.

All slides submitted will be retained by *Metalsmith* and SNAG for archival, research and educational purposes, and as an editorial resource for *Metalsmith*.

The submission of a signed entry form will indicate your permission for *Metalsmith* and/or SNAG to retain, duplicate, and publish images of your work, and your agreement to the terms and conditions set forth in this prospectus.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to apply with images that have not been widely circulated in *Metalsmith* or other publications.

Please share this prospectus and entry form. All forms may be duplicated.

To obtain additional entry forms or membership information, send SASE to:

Keith A. Lewis
"Exhibition in Print 2004"
1121 Lake Washington Blvd.
Seattle, WA 98122

WHAT TO SUBMIT

The exhibition will be juried from 35mm color slides. Each artist must submit 5 slides (detail slides are acceptable but the total number of slides submitted, including details, must equal 5). Slides must be of professional quality and mounted in standard cardboard or plastic mounts, without loose labels or tape.

Each slide should be labeled with the following:

- ❑ artist's name
- ❑ title of work
- ❑ dimensions of work (height x width x depth) in inches
- ❑ materials
- ❑ year of completion
- ❑ an "up" arrow in the top right hand corner on the front side

The slides should be clearly numbered to correspond to information supplied on the entry form. During the jurying all five slides will be projected simultaneously.

CATEGORIES

architectural works

ironwork

enamel

flatware

furniture

holloware

housewares

installation (incl. installation and site-specific works)

jewelry

precious jewelry (primarily precious metal and gems)

production jewelry

liturgical objects

multiple categories

other

In the space provided on the entry form, **specify the category** that best describes the work you are submitting. Only one category may be selected. For example, if you enter a series of one-of-a-kind enamel brooches, you should apply under either "enamel" or "jewelry." If, however, you choose to apply with work that falls into more than one category (e.g., two brooches and three teapots), you may apply under the heading "multiple categories." These categories are for jurying purposes only, and every category may not be represented in the publication.

Please include a one-page resume and a typed artist's statement of no more than 125 words. Statements may be printed in the publication, but only those statements of 125 words or less. The statement should relate to the work shown in your slides. Statements may be read during the jurying process.

Entries must be postmarked by Monday, January 5, 2004.

Include a stamped, self-addressed business-sized envelope (#10) for purposes of notification. **Incomplete or non-conforming entries will not be considered.** Entry materials will not be returned.

Notifications of acceptance and rejection will be mailed by April 30, 2004. Phone calls regarding the status of entries cannot be accepted.

JURORS

Jurors for the "Exhibition in Print 2004" were chosen to represent a wide range of professional positions in the field of contemporary metalwork.

Sharon Church, Professor of Art, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Bruce Pepich, Executive Director and Curator of Collections, Racine Art Museum, Racine, WI

James Wallace, Director, The Metals Museum, Memphis, TN

METALSMITH

EXHIBITION IN PRINT 2004

ENTRY FORM

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Entry Category

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furniture
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jewelry
precious jewelry (primarily precious metal and gems)
production jewelry
liturgical objects
multiple categories
other: _____

Checklist *Incomplete entries will not be accepted*

- ❑ Five labeled and numbered slides
- ❑ Completely filled-out and signed entry form
- ❑ 125 word maximum **typed** artist statement
- ❑ One-page resume
- ❑ Self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope (#10)
- ❑ Entry fee **payable to SNAG**, in U.S. funds (check one category)
  - ❑ SNAG Member $20
  - ❑ Non-Member $30
  - ❑ New SNAG Member

If you are joining SNAG at this time, please check the membership category below and be sure to include your membership fee along with your $20 SNAG member entry fee.

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Calendar:

January 5, 2004	**Postmark deadline for entries**
February, 2004	Jurying
April 30, 2004	Notifications mailed
Fall 2004	"Exhibition in Print 2004" is mailed and available on newsstands

SLIDE DESCRIPTIONS

Please print or type

Slide 1

Title

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.)

H: W: D:

Dimensions (in inches)

Materials

Date Photographer

Slide 2

Title

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.)

H: W: D:

Dimensions (in inches)

Materials

Date Photographer

Slide 3

Title

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.)

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Dimensions (in inches)

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Date Photographer

Slide 4

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Materials

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Slide 5

Title

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Materials

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Please keep a photocopy of the signed and dated entry form for your records.

I grant *Metalsmith* and SNAG the right to retain, publish and duplicate any and all slides and text submitted herewith, including the posting of images on the SNAG/*Metalsmith* website. I agree to all conditions of this prospectus.

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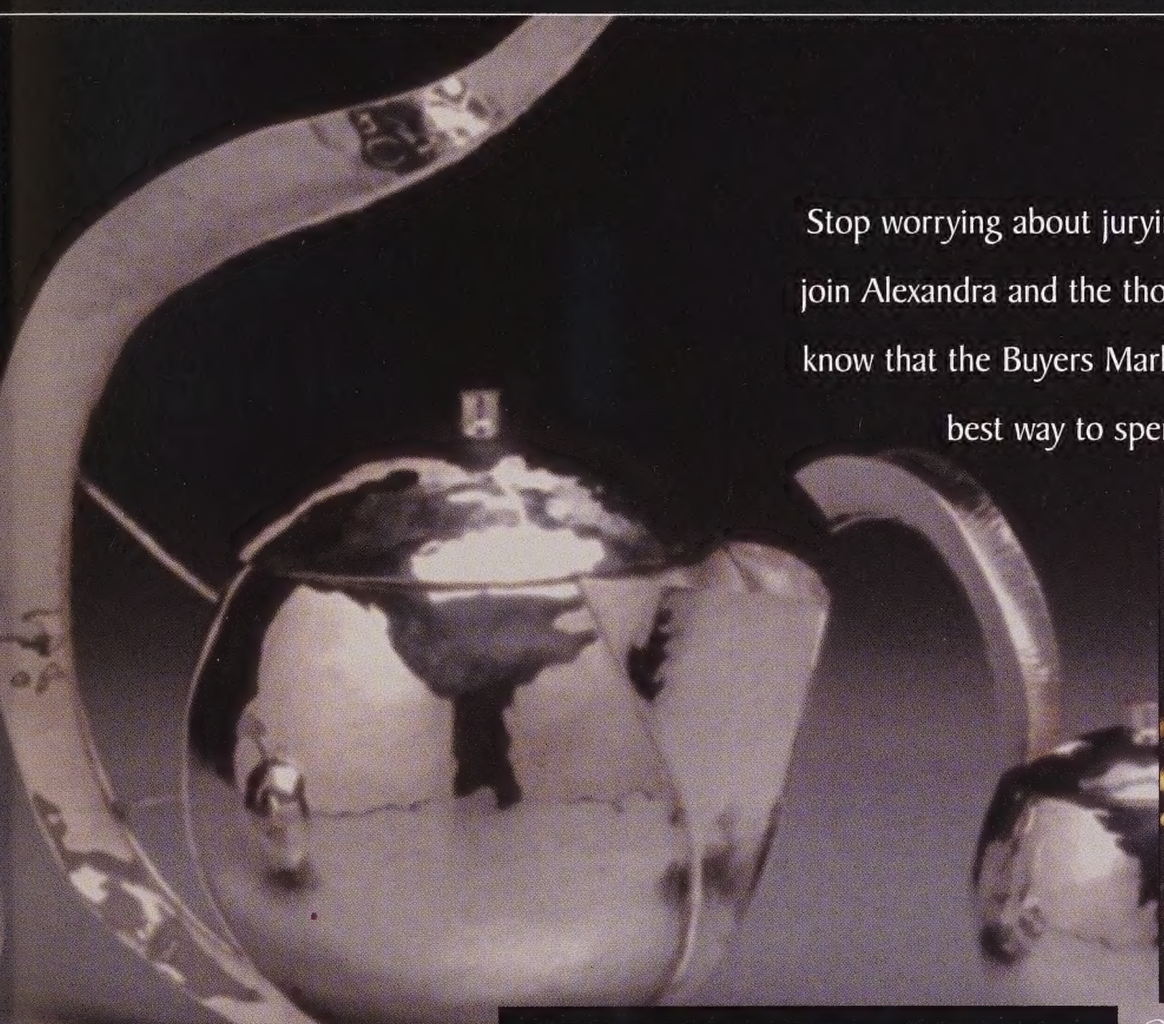

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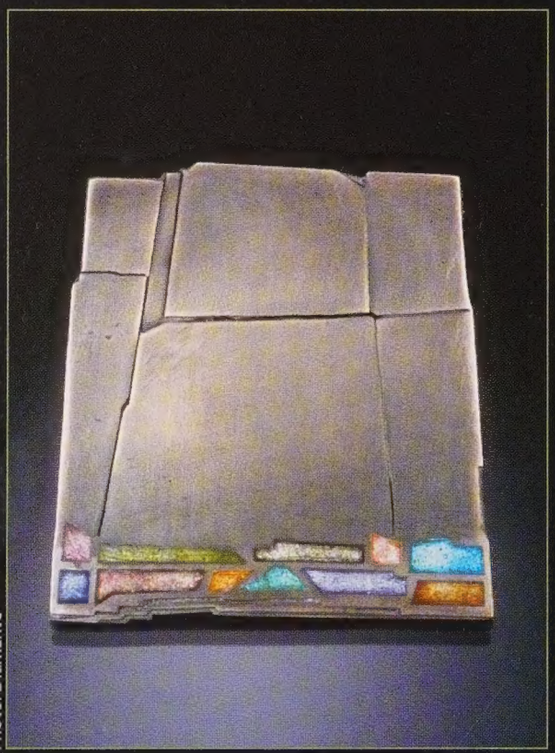

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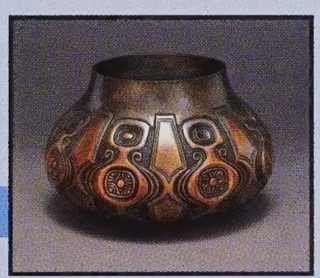

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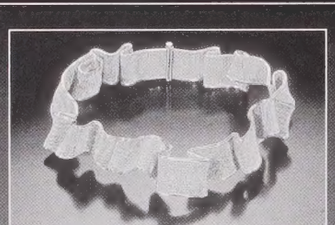

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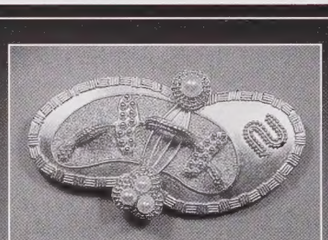

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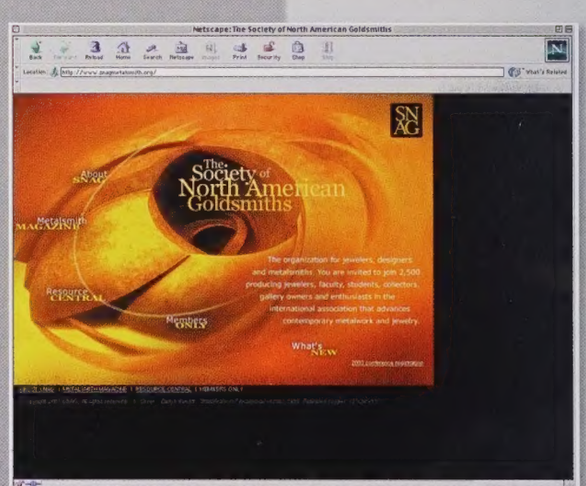

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Shaping Our Future

by Donald Friedlich

Viewers admiring Kent Raible's *Pregnant Chalice* at the opening of "The Art of Gold" exhibition, 2003
Photo: Janet S. Regan

Over the years, I've participated in many conversations at conferences and craft shows about the lack of recognition and respect for American jewelry and metalsmithing by critics, curators, museums, and the media—as well as the general absence of a good market for the work we make. Many, it seems, feel our work isn't understood and our field isn't valued. Many have grown impatient with what we see as inadequate progress.

I, too, am impatient, but when I stop and think back over the last 50 years or so since the birth of the current American craft movement, at least for a little while, I'm encouraged. Since the 1950s we have seen huge advances in the skill and sophistication of our work. We have matured conceptually and technically. I credit the university system, workshops, galleries, SNAG, publications like *Metalsmith* and, of course, the passion of the makers themselves for this extraordinary progress. We owe a huge debt to the generosity of our predecessors.

During this period, the markets have also seen amazing growth. The hippie days of selling work from the backs of trucks at outdoor fairs have given way to multi-million dollar trade shows that attract and educate hundreds of thousands of retail and wholesale customers. The craft shows have greatly contributed to the profile and viability of our field. We may work alone in our studios, but when we come together we comprise a major industry. In fact, according to the Craft Organization Directors Association (CODA) *Economic Impact Study of Craft*, craft in America is a $13.8 billion industry.

By comparison "only" about two billion dollars worth of guns are sold in the U.S. each year. Yet the NRA has a huge political impact, while our voice is nearly mute. Despite the impressive size of the craft industry and the advances we've made, we still find ourselves marginalized. While attempting to distinguish our field from the rest of the jewelry world, we seem to have isolated ourselves, while at the same time we cry out in disbelief that we're unappreciated and misunderstood. We don't even have a name for what we do that most people recognize. We lack what in advertising parlance is called branding.

For years we have hoped outsiders such as fine art critics and curators might help us establish a profile by validating our work. It's time we stop barking up that tree. We can't wait for an outsider to change the way we are perceived. We have to do that work ourselves.

So, what does this involve? Engaging a wider audience for the objects we make requires building on our assets as a community by pooling our limited financial resources and our substantial human resources. It also entails looking beyond our own studios and acting with generosity towards the field as a whole. Preaching to the choir at conferences and universities may have its rewards, but if we preach only to the choir our days are numbered. Achieving further public awareness requires the joint effort of both the academic and marketplace jewelers. I've long felt that each of these branches can learn valuable lessons from the other that would be good for the field as a whole.

The marketplace jeweler should look to the academy's commitment to experimentation, research, and personal voice. These values will enliven the markets and broaden public understanding of what jewelry can be. This is important because the marketplace can be an inherently conservative force and can encourage unoriginal work. The critical standards set by our best universities remind us that just because something sells, that doesn't make it good.

Of course, it doesn't make it bad, either, and given the dearth of teaching jobs, universities can help the field by providing more professional practice classes and by viewing the creation of good production work as a design challenge worthy of the academy. I believe the result would be better production work in the marketplace and more of our graduates remaining in the field. The sobering fact is that almost no U.S. jeweler I know makes a decent living selling only one-of-a-kind work. Unique work may play a significant role in our sales, but it's rarely our only source of income. Most have to find other ways to make ends meet and that usually means a production line.

I recognize that the primary purpose of our university system is not to prepare students for the marketplace, and I am by no means suggesting we turn Cranbrook Academy into Revere Academy or vice versa. Both fill their respective roles well. I also acknowledge that students' lives take them into a multitude of arenas and they must take responsibility for their own education and careers. Still, the training they receive and the attitudes they develop while in school can make a difference. I'd like to see more graduate schools develop a curriculum that looks, even in some minor way, beyond the academy and the art world, to the design world and the business world. Most of our graduates seem to have little idea of how to make a living selling their work or working in the trade or for industry. While they can get some of this information in workshops and at the programs offered at SNAG conferences, these don't offer the depth of a semester-long class.

Many schools already offer this. At Towson University, Jan Baum devotes a semester to professional practices, teaches a production class and has also arranged for her students to volunteer to help exhibitors at the nearby Baltimore ACC Craft Fair. Tyler School of Art provides a significant emphasis on the use of CAD/CAM technology, while still covering the history and traditions of craft. Tyler requires seniors to take a course called Business Practices in the Crafts. Tyler's Stanley Lechtzin says, "I believe we have a responsibility to prepare them in some significant way to enter the profession." At Oregon College of Art and Craft (OCAC) the curriculum includes a full year of Professional Practices. Christine Clark says, "the faculty at OCAC feel[s] it gives students a huge leg up before they enter the real world and builds self-confidence and resourcefulness."

Some schools address marketplace issues less formally. At the University of Illinois-Champaign, Billie Theide requires students to prepare professional portfolios and invites marketplace artists to campus. Theide says, "My colleagues in glass and ceramics don't share my enthusiasm for this approach and my colleagues in painting and sculpture frown on it."

Other educators report a similar reaction from colleagues. Retired metals professor Michael Croft says, "[G]iving students specific training in the skills needed for success in industry or the trade...would be the fast track to oblivion. It is exactly the sort of thing which would be jumped on as being antithetical to a good art education."

Clearly, art department culture is a major influence on how (and whether) metalsmithing is taught in universities. Generally, I feel the art departments have been an excellent influence on the field. Given that some schools either can't or won't offer professional practices classes, perhaps an alternative method of getting this information to emerging artists should be considered. That said, it worries me that professional development and art education seem to sometimes be viewed in opposition to each other instead of as complementary.

I am also concerned about the recent demise of a number of metals programs that, according to Croft, "may not be going the way of the dodo, [but] may be going the way of the buffalo—greatly reduced in numbers, quietly living in small preserves as curiosities." As Stanley Lechtzin says when asked about the future of the field, "Due to the fact that most of us continue to teach what we've been taught, in the way that we were taught, I don't think we'll be able to sustain the needed momentum for our survival, let alone our growth." Both are sobering statements. Lechtzin's might be summed up with one of history's most frequently heard axioms: "evolve or perish."

In addition to the closing of programs, I see other signs that concern me. Fewer new artists appear to be entering the marketplace. The average age of the craftspeople that CODA surveyed was 49. Less than 10% were under 35. Where are our graduates going? I've also noticed that, like us, our collectors are aging. At a recent SOFA Exposition, I was struck by how many collectors I've known for years were navigating the aisles with canes. They were exquisite, hand-carved canes—but they were canes nonetheless. We need to energize and retain new generations of metalsmiths and lovers of metal work. That's the job of the marketplace, true, but it's the job of universities as well.

We've come far in the past 50 years. It's now time to come together and acknowledge that the diverse aspects of our field need each other. Speaking with one voice, we can have greater impact when we try to broaden our circle, expand the market, and engage the world around us. In recent years the SNAG Board has endeavored to do just that by changing the organization from one that is primarily internally focused to one that's extroverted and involved with other organizations and companies.

This new approach has already led to a number of successes, among them the recent competition and exhibition sponsored by 3M Incorporated. The exhibition's organizer, Anne Hollerbach, appealed to 3M's enlightened self-interest. That is, rather than going to 3M for philanthropy, she went saying we have something of value to offer you. 3M agreed and the exhibit that resulted was remarkable.

Another example of the benefits of this relationship-building is "The Art of Gold" exhibition marketed by ExhibitsUSA and currently touring museums around the country. Perhaps this show can serve as a metaphor for the unified path I'm advocating. Here—in the museum environment so many of us long for—is the work of the marketplace jeweler exhibited side by side with the work of the jeweler commenting wryly on the marketplace. Here is the work meant to complement the wearer and the work meant to be contemplated by the wearer. Here is the ancient, seductive material of gold in objects reflecting our own times. Here is our world—the work artistic, the audience receptive, the collectors of tomorrow being developed.

We need more of this. Camaraderie, collaboration, community, engagement—that's what I hope our future brings us. ⧗

Donald Friedlich is a jeweler in Madison, Wisconsin, and a former SNAG President. This article is based on his presentation at SNAG's 2003 conference in San Francisco.

The Work of Mark Rooker

by Tacey A. Rosolowski

Played Out (brooch), from "Short Stories" series, 1998
electroformed copper, sterling silver, anodized aluminum, amethyst, ebony, nickel, silver plating, patina
3 1/2 x 2 1/4 x 1 1/2"

Played Out (back)

Missiles chase one another around Mark Rooker's *Circular Reasoning*. Beneath the smoke plumes, lustrous silver water ripples on the bracelet's surface and separates two island nations, each with a hut and a nearby hatch that opens to launch another exchange of missiles. Rooker describes *Circular Reasoning* as "a diagram" of political madness. Tiny ladders lead us through the cross section, extending from the huts, down through the bracelet, to the system of loaded missile silos visible on the bracelet's interior.

The bracelet is one of a series, "Short Stories," in which Rooker exploits the surfaces of jewelry forms to create narrative. *Played Out*, inspired by sci-fi imagery of the 1930s and 1940s, spins another tale. We explore the minute spaceship and mining rig laden with gems. The ship orbits a gleaming moon. We discover a portal on its pocked surface, peer in, and turn the piece over. On the back we see mining equipment extracting the moon's last stones—"Chapter Two" of a story of luxury bought with resource-depletion.

In the spirit of sci-fi authors, Rooker uses fantasy worlds as a mirror in which we see ourselves—and our defects—more clearly. "Regular Programming" offers disturbing reflections. Each of these seven brooches is a one-eyed robot. "They don't need depth perception," Rooker notes. "They just look at a TV screen." *Upgrade* is corroded, absorbed in gluing a Mercedes-Benz hood ornament to its forehead. *Overload* glows in Ronald McDonald yellow and red, its arms laden with Cokes and cheeseburgers. Accessorized with products, these figures tell of desires programmed by mass media. The most compelling may be *Fatal Error*, glaring with a carnelian eye and adorned with guns ready for firing. When displayed (each brooch has an installation setting), this figure appears against a warning about the violent content of video games. Rooker's virtuoso rendering of this riveted, mechanical being reminds us that the media engineers our emotional de-sensitization as well as our consumer impulses.

Rooker's ironic wit takes a lighter tone in the "Flotsam and Jetsons" series, as *Grand Theft*, demonstrates. A rocket tows a 15-millimeter cubic zirconium. Rooker captures the mission as it is sabotaged by two flying

saucers, one armed with scissors to snip the tow-line, the other with a catcher's mitt to grab the loot.

Are the UFOs tiny, or is the cubic zirconium enormous, towed by a NASA-sized space vehicle? Rooker often plays games with ambiguous scale. Here he also uses the human body as an Otherworld setting with its own characters. The rockets are "big and stupid," Rooker says; the flying saucers are smart, mobile, and saucy. They all occupy a universe with whimsically-conceived phenomenon. Why does a gem decide to pop from its setting? What black hole do lost buttons fall into? Why do threads come undone, splitting a garment like a planet fragmenting into asteroids? Of course it must be minuscule flying saucers that swoop in with mechanical arms to clip and snip or to loosen the connections in one's eyeglasses with a tiny screwdriver.

These pieces turn life's annoyances into "one liners," as Rooker says. Many fantasists find playful dimensions in their imagined worlds; and they often use them for serio-comic effect. *Petty Theft*—a saucer prying a "gem" from a costume brooch—suggests the proliferation of "arms" that threatens the security of precious resources. Rooker seduces us with fantasy imagery. It takes a moment to realize that even his jewelry-jokes deliver social observation and cultural critique. ⧗

Tacey A. Rosolowski, a writer who currently resides in Washington, D.C., is the 2003 James Renwick Fellow in American Craft.

clockwise from left
Grand Theft (brooch), from "Flotsam and Jetsons" series, 2003
sterling silver, anodized niobium, anodized aluminum, yellow brass, cubic zirconium, ebony
6 x 2 1/2 x 1"

Circular Reasoning (detail)

Circular Reasoning (bracelet), from "Short Stories" series, 2003
sterling silver, anodized niobium
3 3/4 x 3 3/4 x 1 14"

Fatal Error (brooch), from "Regular Programming" series, 2000
sterling silver, powder coated niobium, anodized and dyed aluminum, yellow brass, carnelian bead
4 x 2 3/4 x 2 3/4"

All photography by Mark Rooker

Jeffrey Herman

by Cynthia Eid

Jeffrey Herman in the studio with his vast collection of hammers and stakes, 2002.
Photo: Cynthia Eid

Jeffrey Herman is an accomplished silversmith, master of holloware repair, and the founding director of the Society of American Silversmiths. His live/work space includes areas devoted to each of these specialties. The front door opens into a 25 by 40 foot open area that comprises living room, kitchen, drafting, and office spaces. The ceilings soar 13 feet above. Large windows frame a sunset view. The floors in this former brewery are marvelous old hardwood that has been polished and varnished, adding warmth, character, and a smooth surface for scooting around on a wheeled desk chair.

After an appreciative glance around the living area, I was anxious to see the studio. We headed down the hall past the bedroom, and entered the silver/shipping room, which is 9 by 19 feet, with a window at the other end, tables along the right wall, and shelves along the left. The shelves are a museum display—a collection of holloware waiting to be repaired, sent by collectors and the best antique stores in the country. We examined a damaged container and brooch by Jack Prip, a Georg Jensen tray that needs a pin in the handle, a Gorham tray that has been polished so many times that the design has worn and needs to be re-chased, a gilt bronze chandelier in pieces, a teapot that has been polished and repaired so often that it has an elusive pinhole leak, and a table piled with silverware sent to Jeff to have the monograms polished off. We discussed the tragedy of removing the exquisitely hand-engraved initials, and agreed that we'd gladly change our names if meant that we could keep this set. I groaned at the sight of a baby cup with the bottom smashed in and handle broken off, but Jeff's face lit up. "I love that stuff!" he exclaimed, and I thought to myself, "That is why I refer all repairs to Jeff—he does them well, and cheerfully, too." The variety of the repairs keeps his day interesting and constantly challenging. Making his living through these repairs gives Jeff total freedom when doing his own creative work. We found ourselves doing some silversmith sleuthing, trying to figure out how the huge crack occurred in the Jensen pitcher that arrived in the day's mail. I was pleased when the enclosed letter confirmed my guess: it was forgotten in the freezer where it had been put to chill refreshments.

After our tour through silver history and forensics, we went further down the hall to the main studio. Seventy-five hammers and 150 stakes, in perfect condition, are lined up in racks. It is an array that any university would be thrilled to own. I laughed to see socks on the horse (the steel bar that holds steel mushroom style heads in a vise) and learned a new tip: the sock keeps the silver from being scratched by the steel. On the other side of the

door is a favorite tool: a spring hammer. This huge hammer is mounted on a pivot over an anvil, so that it always lands exactly flat—perfect for planishing a tray. In the center of the room is a stump with vises mounted on it to hold the stakes when Jeff raises a new piece, or presses out dents in a large soup tureen. A large silver bowl sat on a shelf nearby, waiting for Jeff to find time to finish raising and planishing it. Near a window is a sink with a wire brush, and the soldering area, enclosed by a large hood. A table nearby held a collection of silver from which Jeff had nearly finished removing the monograms. A teapot needed its ivory insulator repaired. A hand mirror waited to have the dents smoothed out and the mirror re-silvered.

View of the artist at his bench polishing off monograms, with soldering booth to the side, 2002
Photo: Cynthia Eid

I am impressed by the attention to safety in this well-equipped studio. For instance, Jeff's workbench has a duct hose connected to his exhaust system. It can be aimed wherever needed, as he files, grinds, or polishes. Last, we toured the machine tool room. Jeff showed me how his elaborate exhaust system has an outlet at each tool: the drill press, the sander, a polishing motor, the band saw, the lathe, disc sander, and his largest enclosed polishing lathe. This polishing set-up is closest to the dust collector for maximum suction. Baffles allow each outlet to be opened or closed off, to maximize the power at the station in use. It is a remarkably clean and efficient workspace.

Across the hall lives a Reggae band, and their music wafts through the door. Downstairs, we visit a ceramist's live/work space, where there is a bedroom loft over an elaborate custom kitchen and living area adjoining a large production studio with a gallery and small private studio. This building is a village, with students from Rhode Island School of Design sharing space with musicians and professional visual artists. Jeff Herman is a unique gem in this society, as in our metalsmithing community.

Cynthia Eid is a studio artist who smiths and teaches in the Boston area.

Jeffrey Herman
Vase, 1995
sterling silver, pearls
5 x 3"
Photo: Arling Studio

Study of Northern Black Rat Snake Necklace, 1984-2000
fine silver, enamel
9 1/2 x 7 x 1"
Photo: Robert Butcher

The Small, Great World of David Freda

All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small ...

Mrs. C. F. Alexander 1823-95

by Jennifer Cross Gans

One function of art is to challenge the status quo—to persuade, shock, or seduce us into seeing the world, and perhaps our own attitudes and beliefs, differently. David Freda, a San Clemente, California, metal artist and enamelist makes art out of things many of us would like to step on or avoid because we consider them strange, frightening, nasty, or squirmy.

"I like the challenge to take repulsive things and make them beautiful," he said. "When someone says 'jewels' to me, I think of frogs and snakes. I want people to see what I see." And what he wants people to see is the beauty of the natural world in action, the story of its mating, hatching, feeding, and fighting that is mostly off our radar screens.

There is no doubt that Freda is succeeding brilliantly. In 2002 he won Rio Grande's Saul Bell Design Award for a necklace in fine silver and enamel showing the life cycle of a stag beetle—the adult insect, grubs, and juicy raspberries, its favorite food. His work is also exhibited widely and can be seen on the bodies of some wealthy collectors. Most of his work is neckpieces and brooches, but he occasionally does larger work, such as wall sculptures and conference tables. Insects, snakes, and amphibians show up regularly in his designs—but he also likes fish, leaves, and unusual plants. He is in increasing demand as a teacher and speaker on the subjects at which he excels: enameling, mold making, and casting, particularly hollow core casting.

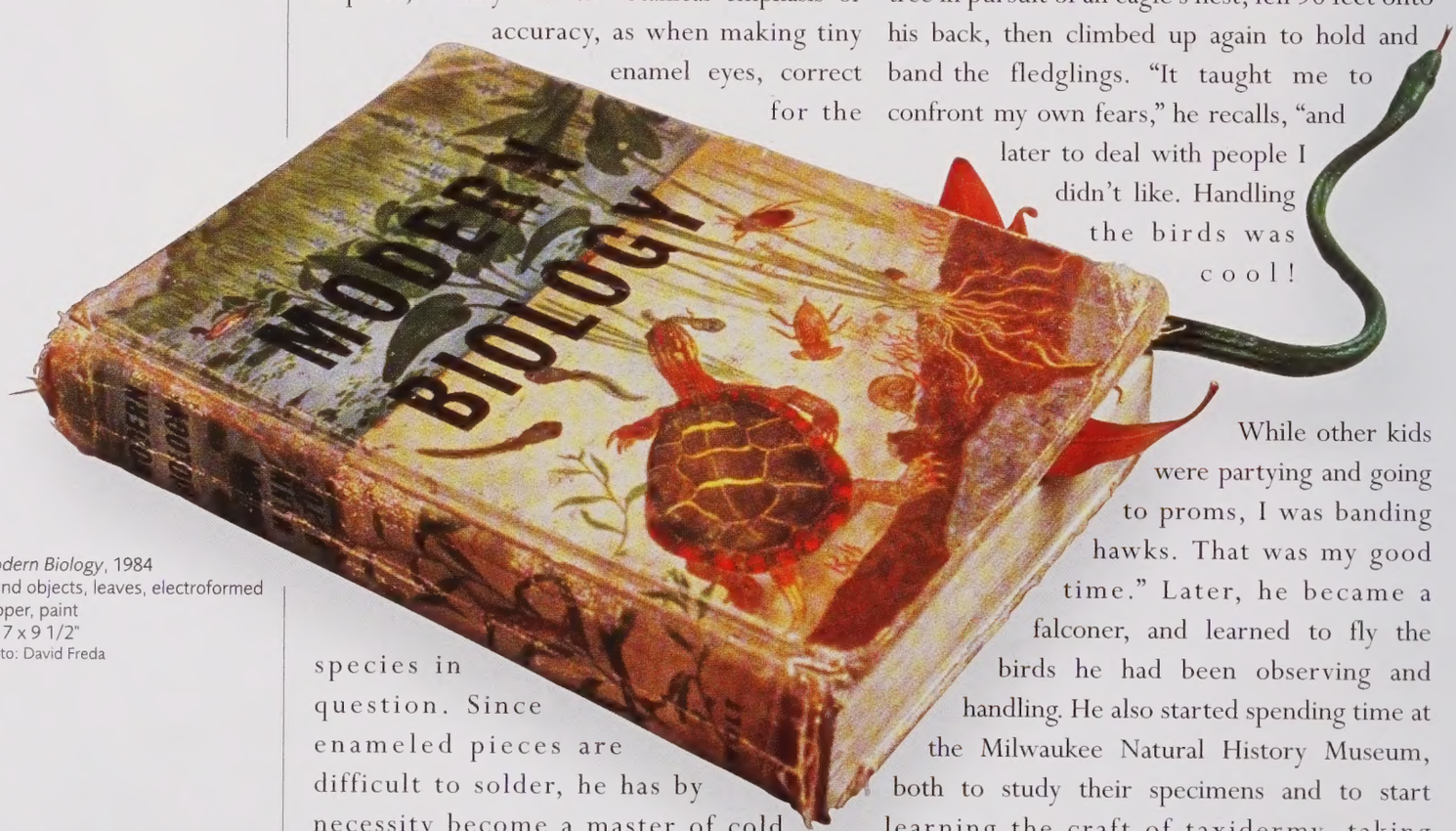
Ceremonial Wedding Platter, 1982
sterling silver, 14k yellow gold, brass
5 x 10 x 10"
Photo: David Freda

A classic example of his work is his "signature neckpiece" of hatching Northern black rat snakes, a piece that is so popular it is his only limited production item. He got the idea when he found black rat snake egg cases on an outdoor trip, and made the prototype with actual specimens. They did not hold up well, so his next version was cast in sterling, depleted, and enameled a luminescent white. The third

time, he cast the whole thing in fine silver, the snakelets in authentic wiggles, enameled each component, and ingeniously cold connected everything. The "yeech" factor did not hurt sales. A current client of Freda's who bought the necklace admitted to being afraid of snakes.

Freda has improved on nature, turning a writhing mass of snakelets, reminiscent of Medusa having a bad hair day, into a pleasing and intriguing neckpiece.

Technically, the piece is interesting because it is hollow core cast in a technique Freda has perfected after years of experimentation with mold making, different casting waxes, the best wax injecting technique, and the best method of pinning to stabilize the investment within the wax form. It is also enameled to perfection. Unlike many enamelists who work flat, or use color to create design, Freda always works sculpturally, using color to replicate nature and add another dimension to the work. He does not revel in decoration for its own sake, but uses it to make a point, usually one of botanical emphasis or accuracy, as when making tiny enamel eyes, correct for the species in question. Since enameled pieces are difficult to solder, he has by necessity become a master of cold connections, using tiny screws and rivets (here, to attach the snakes to the eggs), either fabricating them from scratch, or enhancing manufactured products with 24k gold heads.



Modern Biology, 1984
found objects, leaves, electroformed copper, paint
4 x 7 x 9 1/2"
Photo: David Freda

Artistically, the piece is harmoniously designed and well balanced. Freda has improved on nature, turning a writhing mass of snakelets, reminiscent of Medusa having a bad hair day, into a pleasing and intriguing neckpiece. Like many artists, he has a persistent and creative sense of play, and while he usually starts work with a finished design in mind, he will spend as long as necessary to arrange the components to his liking.

But why snakes? To begin to understand Freda's interest in the natural world, you have to turn back the clock to 1963, when local newspaper reporters in his Wisconsin hometown did a small feature on the nine-year-old boy they tagged as a naturalist in training. Neighbors, said the paper, "are accustomed to seeing the little blond fellow tramping the field with his homemade butterfly net." He was fortunate in having parents who encouraged his interest in bugs, birds, and butterflies, besides the bumblebees, three turtles, and dog at home.

As he grew a little older, Freda flirted with bee-keeping, collected insects and reptiles, and joined a group of naturalists to band bald eagles. During one memorable field trip, he climbed a tree in pursuit of an eagle's nest, fell 90 feet onto his back, then climbed up again to hold and band the fledglings. "It taught me to confront my own fears," he recalls, "and later to deal with people I didn't like. Handling the birds was cool!

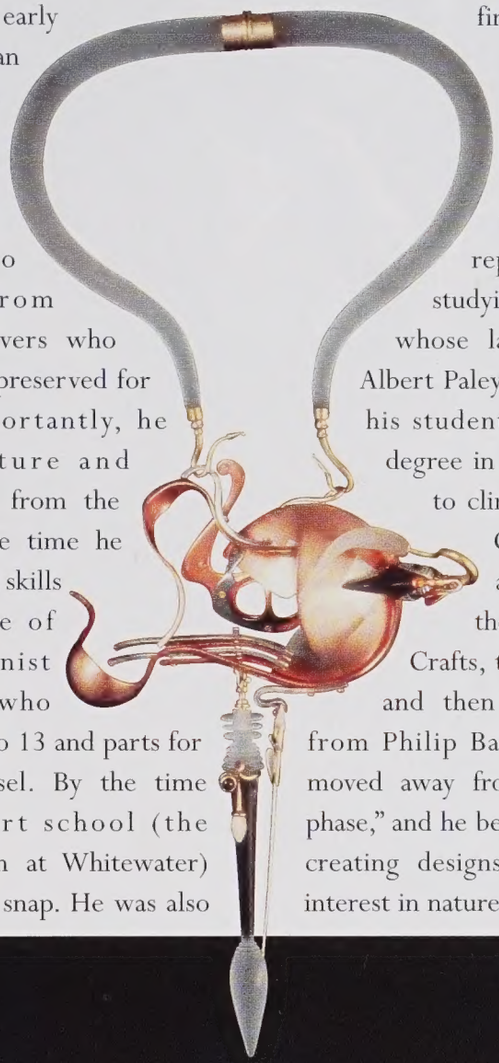
While other kids were partying and going to proms, I was banding hawks. That was my good time." Later, he became a falconer, and learned to fly the birds he had been observing and handling. He also started spending time at the Milwaukee Natural History Museum, both to study their specimens and to start learning the craft of taxidermy, taking correspondence courses and practicing on road kill. Still energetic and restless, he became scuba certified, diving the cool Wisconsin lakes to watch beavers dam-building. He also got interested in tropical fish.

Had he been better at academic subjects, Freda

Tropical Orchid (brooch), 2003
fine silver, 24k, 18k, 14k yellow gold, enamel, pearl
3 1/4 x 2 1/2 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

Shooting Stars (brooch), 2003
fine silver, 24k, 18k, 14k yellow gold,
enamel, pearl
4 x 3 1/2 x 2"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner

would probably have earned a Ph.D. in biology and gone on to be a naturalist and teacher. However, life, and his own skills, diverted him from this path. From an early age he showed talent as an artist, making drawings and watercolors of birds and selling them to teachers and friends. His study of taxidermy also produced income from hunters and animal lovers who wanted their kill or pets preserved for posterity. More importantly, he learned the structure and musculature of animals from the inside out. At the same time he gained valuable technical skills by working a couple of summers as a machinist alongside his father, who made nose tips for Apollo 13 and parts for Jacques Cousteau's vessel. By the time Freda enrolled in art school (the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater) sculpture classes were a snap. He was also able to use his profitable hobbies to help finance his BFA.



In college, Freda quickly switched from fine arts to metalwork. His early interest was piqued by the desire to make his own bells for his hawks instead of using Pakistani imports. He started in earnest doing chasing and repoussé with Marcia Lewis, studying later with Kelly Morris, whose lavishly illustrated thesis on Albert Paley became a major influence on his student work. After receiving his degree in 1979, he moved to Colorado to climb, ski, and work on the Rio Grande railroad. He then spent a year as artist-in-residence at the Oregon School of Arts & Crafts, teaching, doing his own work, and then learning colors and patinas from Philip Baldwin. Gradually his work moved away from what he called his "Paley phase," and he began including more color, and creating designs directly influenced by his interest in nature.

Quadratic Form, 1979
copper, sterling, brass, Plexiglas, ivory, garnet, hawk beak
6 x 2"
Photo: David Freda

The Fish Hunter (brooch), 2002
fine and sterling silver, 24k, 18k, 14k yellow gold, enamel
6 x 3 1/2 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Barry Blau

Study of Carnivorous Pitcher Plant (sculpture), 2001
24k and 18k yellow gold, fine silver, brass, copper, enamel
7 x 7 x 7"
Photo: Barry Blau

Graduate school beckoned, and Freda spent three years at the State University of New York at New Paltz, studying with Bob Evendorf and Kurt Matzdorf. It was not a good fit, despite the company of fellow students John Cogswell, Charles Lewton-Brain, and Lisa Gralnick. Ironically, Freda was unhappy doing enameling and casting, two techniques in which he was later to excel. He also got bogged down writing his thesis—"Integrating the Art of Taxidermy with Metalsmithing Techniques"—and he left without graduating. The experience left him disappointed and with the determination to prove himself. It was a burr under his saddle that would last a lifetime.

For the next 12 or so years, he worked as a jeweler. He met Barbara Rockefeller (a member of the celebrated family, who also had her own jewelry company), who fell in love with and bought a great deal of his work, starting with the first hatching snake neckpiece. Through her, Freda was gradually introduced to big collectors and art dealers in New York, where he lived for a while, supplementing his income by foraging for wild mushrooms and trading them to fancy restaurants for meals. But the money started coming in, including a few big commissions. "Selling work for a lot of money is like climbing a mountain," he recalled. "It's an adrenaline high. It's also a privilege when people purchase your work—it helps keep your creativity flowing."

However, boredom set in in 1992, when he took time out from jewelry making to pursue a long-time interest: he began breeding reptiles and started living in the Wildlife Discovery Center in New York, a new museum for living reptiles. For the next five years he worked as the curator, and honed his skills designing some 80 living exhibits of snakes, poison arrow frogs, and other animals. He also did mold-making at the museum, and made plaster, then section molds for dioramas, and experimented with different casting methods.

A turning point came after he saw a Lalique exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt Museum. He vowed: "I am going to get into this at a hard core level! I am going to pick up where Lalique left off!" He resumed jewelry making, starting with

his signature necklaces, then snapping turtles (hatching), stag beetles hatching and fighting, an octopus grabbing a crab claw, frogs and fish. Each piece told its own distinct story. Each also came with a shadow box for elegant display when not being worn, in part because he disliked the idea of it being hidden away in a jewelry case.

Freda continued his technical experiments in hollow core casting and enameling. He was finally able to solve the problems inherent in enameling on aluminum, notably its propensity to melt and crack off its glass coating, a challenge which had bugged him since his undergraduate days. He worked on different enameling techniques, including grisaille, cloisonné and champlevé. He perfected his own style of enameling on fine silver, spurred on and encouraged by the work of John Paul Miller and William Harper. He went to endless lengths to get precisely the right color, even venturing into Death Valley to re-photograph pupfish for a commissioned piece.

Towards the end of the century, his life changed again, as he moved to San Clemente to live and work with Patricia McAleer, an expert in metal corrugation. Here he has ample space for his casting equipment, a foundry, and a large, light studio overlooking the ocean, Catalina Island, and opposite, Camp Pendleton.

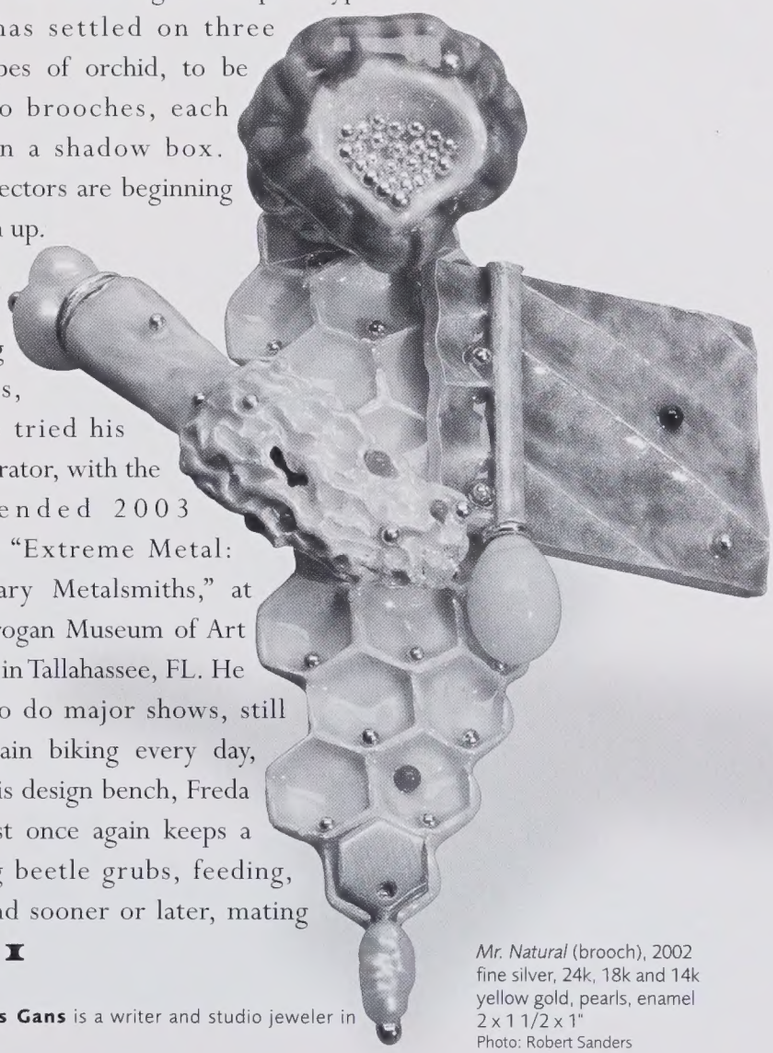
Where will Freda's work go next? It is becoming more abstract, combining a favorite example of wild life with geometric shapes and occasional jewels such as pearls. It is also becoming more surreal. When Mobilia Gallery invited artists in 2002 to submit work based on a favorite painting, he created a "fish hunter" brooch in the style of Hieronymus Bosch, an amazingly whimsical piece portraying a brilliantly colored fish, arrayed with sword and saddle, boating home with a net full of tiny blue tiddlers each no more than one quarter inch long. The effect is simultaneously powerful, funny, and creepy.

At the back of his mind there is still the L-word: Lalique. One way he may succeed the master is with flowers. Freda's current passion is orchids. After careful observation, each flower is mentally deconstructed into 10 or more components. The petals are cast separately, the "whiskers" fabricated, then run through a rolling mill. Each piece is enameled with 200 grit Ninomiya (or old Thompson) leaded colors, in a very small kiln with carefully controlled heat. Not surprisingly, Freda breaks some of the purist rules of application. He does not wash the enamels—this does not appear to hurt their clarity—and often uses them without flux. Instead of making them adhere with Klyr-Fyr or gum tragacanth, he makes his own sticky compound with Klyr-Fyr, lilyroot powder, and spit. Holding each tiny piece with a wire suspender, he sifts on a coat of enamel, propping the wire and piece into a wire trivet, and firing it for about one minute at 1400-1450 degrees F. Each coat is carefully checked for color against the living flower. After the third coat he usually sands the piece and corrects the fit, repeating up to nine to ten firings to get the precise color. The final coat is flash-fired at about 1500 degrees to even out the color. Final touches may include tiny yellow lumps for the center of the orchid, or gold granules, first given a tiny divet, and slightly wet-packed. After working on five prototypes at once, he has settled on three different types of orchid, to be turned into brooches, each mounted in a shadow box. Already collectors are beginning to snap them up.

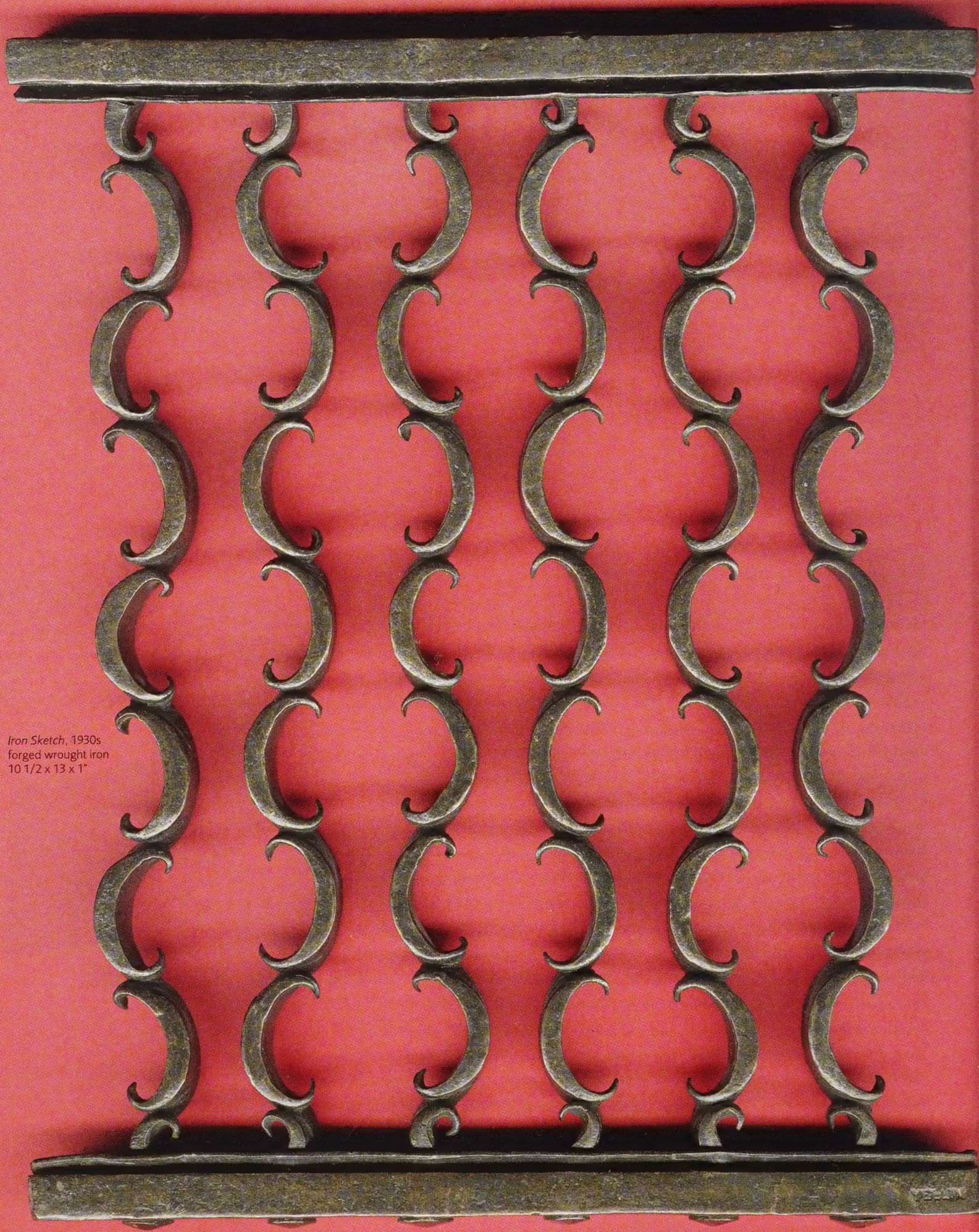
At the back of his mind there is still the L-word: Lalique.

Between teaching and speaking assignments, he has also tried his hand as a curator, with the well-attended 2003 exhibition "Extreme Metal: Contemporary Metalsmiths," at the Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science in Tallahassee, FL. He continues to do major shows, still goes mountain biking every day, and under his design bench, Freda the naturalist once again keeps a nest of stag beetle grubs, feeding, hatching, and sooner or later, mating and fighting. ⧗

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.



Mr. Natural (brooch), 2002
fine silver, 24k, 18k and 14k yellow gold, pearls, enamel
2 x 1 1/2 x 1"
Photo: Robert Sanders



Iron Sketch, 1930s
forged wrought iron
10 1/2 x 13 x 1"

Samuel Yellin

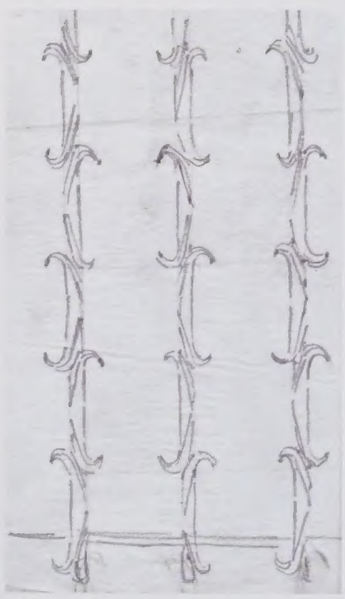
Sketching in Iron

by Anna Fariello

By the mid-nineteenth century, European ironwork was in decline due to innovations brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Cast iron was replacing the more time-consuming and skillfully made hammered iron, driving the decorative smith toward extinction. A French historian wrote that the last piece of decorative ironwork to be produced in the "glorious tradition" of wrought iron was made in 1809 and surrounded the choir in the Cathedral of Notre Dame.[1] One hundred years later—in 1909—a young émigré named Samuel Yellin established a blacksmith shop half a world away and attempted to recreate the quality craftsmanship found in historic ironwork.

Born in 1885 in a village near the Austrian boarder, Samuel Yellin apprenticed with a well-known Polish smith when he was only 12 years old. For the next five years, in the traditional manner, young Yellin learned blacksmithing as a trade, a craft, and an art. In the journeymen phase of a typical European education, a novice smith was taught to recognize how lessons practiced during an apprenticeship fit into the broader context of a chosen field. In 1902, when Yellin left Poland to see ironwork throughout Europe, he reportedly had already achieved his master certificate. Within a few years, he left Europe to join his family in America. In Philadelphia he enrolled in the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art (today's University of the Arts) and was soon invited to teach a metalworking class.

Yellin established his first studio in 1909 with $150 of out-of-pocket capital. Inconveniently located on the top floor of a corner



Untitled Sketch, 1930s
pencil on vellum
5 1/2 x 9 1/2"

right
Samuel Yellin at the forge with a striker on his right, circa 1925

Push Plate, ca. 1920
forged and repoussé wrought iron
3 x 12 1/2 x 1/4"

building in South Philadelphia, the site forced him to haul material up—and finished pieces down—through an open window. In 1915 he moved his operation to 5520 Arch Street, where he would work for the rest of his life. Yellin called his business "Samuel Yellin Metalworker," a name that would become synonymous with craftsmanship as his career progressed. "Samuel Yellin Metalworkers" is still in operation under the direction of the founder's granddaughter, Clare Yellin. In identifying himself in relationship to his material—as a "metalworker" rather than as an artist or sculptor—Yellin consciously promoted himself as a craftsman.

In 1911, Yellin was commissioned to make an entrance gate for J. P. Morgan's Long Island estate. From then on, his documented output was so prolific that by the next year he was described in *The Craftsman* magazine as an ironworker "without peer"—a nice compliment for someone still in his twenties. Founded in 1901 by furniture maker Gustav Stickley, *The Craftsman* was a nationwide forum for discussions of craft, the arts, and related values of quality and simplicity. The author credited Yellin as having (almost single-handedly) revived the craft of wrought iron, noting, "The very spirit of the fire that forged it seems imprisoned in the graceful forms of the iron, and the ring of the hammer on the anvil seems almost to echo in the ear."[2]

An early Yellin piece, made in 1915, illustrates the grace of the artist's hand. An iron bar was delicately drawn out to a fine taper to create a web of interwoven leaves and vines. Each subsequently smaller branch

intertwines to form a harmonious whole with an Art Nouveau lyrical fluidity. Such "graceful forms" would characterize Yellin's work regardless of scale.

Yellin believed that appropriate design must be evident even in the smallest architectural detail, a belief made manifest in an iron door plate he fashioned, circa 1920. The outlines of the push plate converge and flow into a foliate terminus. In turn, the design rolls into itself as if to point the way for the hand to find its place and open the door. Surely a push plate would be considered a minor architectural element, but Yellin, through his subtle handling of the metal, imparts a sense of strength and grace to its modest form. Whether large or small, for public or private space, Yellin's work was meticulous in its attention to detail.

John Ruskin, champion of fine craftsmanship and *the* authoritative cultural voice during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, could have been describing Yellin's work when he wrote, "True ornament [must] be beautiful in its place, and no where else...[It should] aid the effect of every portion of the building."[3] Yellin himself stated, "It is most important that a piece of work shall be harmonious from every point of

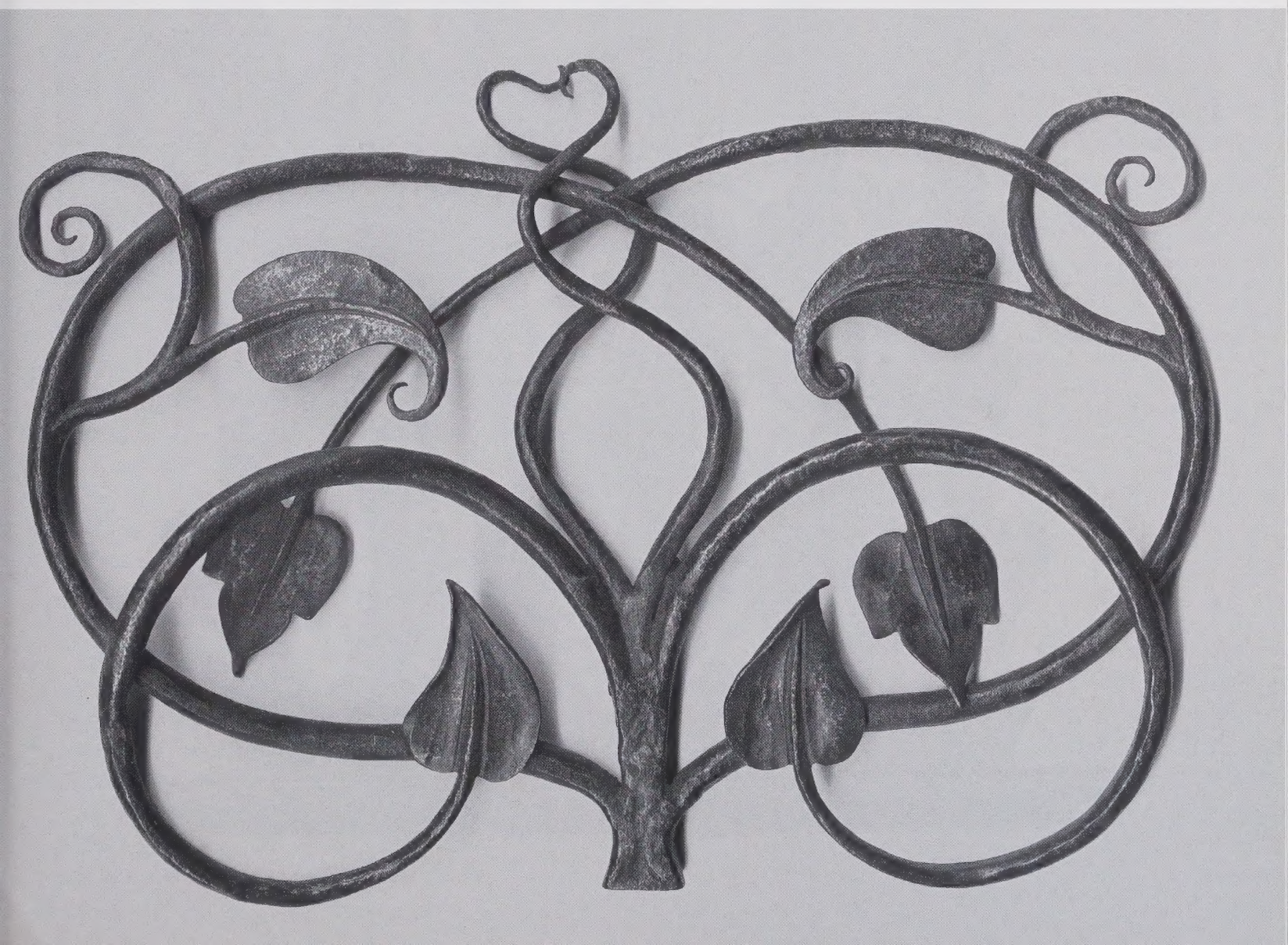
view...for a piece of craftsmanship to be good not the smallest part should receive adverse criticism."[4] Yellin was likely familiar with Ruskin and contemporaneous aesthetic theory through lively discussions with clients and architects, collectors and curators.

Indeed, Yellin's work put him in touch with the rich and the powerful, patrons who read like a *Who's Who* of American industrialists. He produced work for sumptuous estates: Vanderbilt on Long Island, Mellon in Pittsburgh, DuPont in Wilmington, Eastman in Rochester, Ford in Detroit, Heinz in Pittsburgh. His commissions for important public spaces were many, including the Cloisters; universities including Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Columbia; the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco; and the Washington Cathedral in Washington D.C. Much of Philadelphia's historic ironwork came out of Yellin's shop.

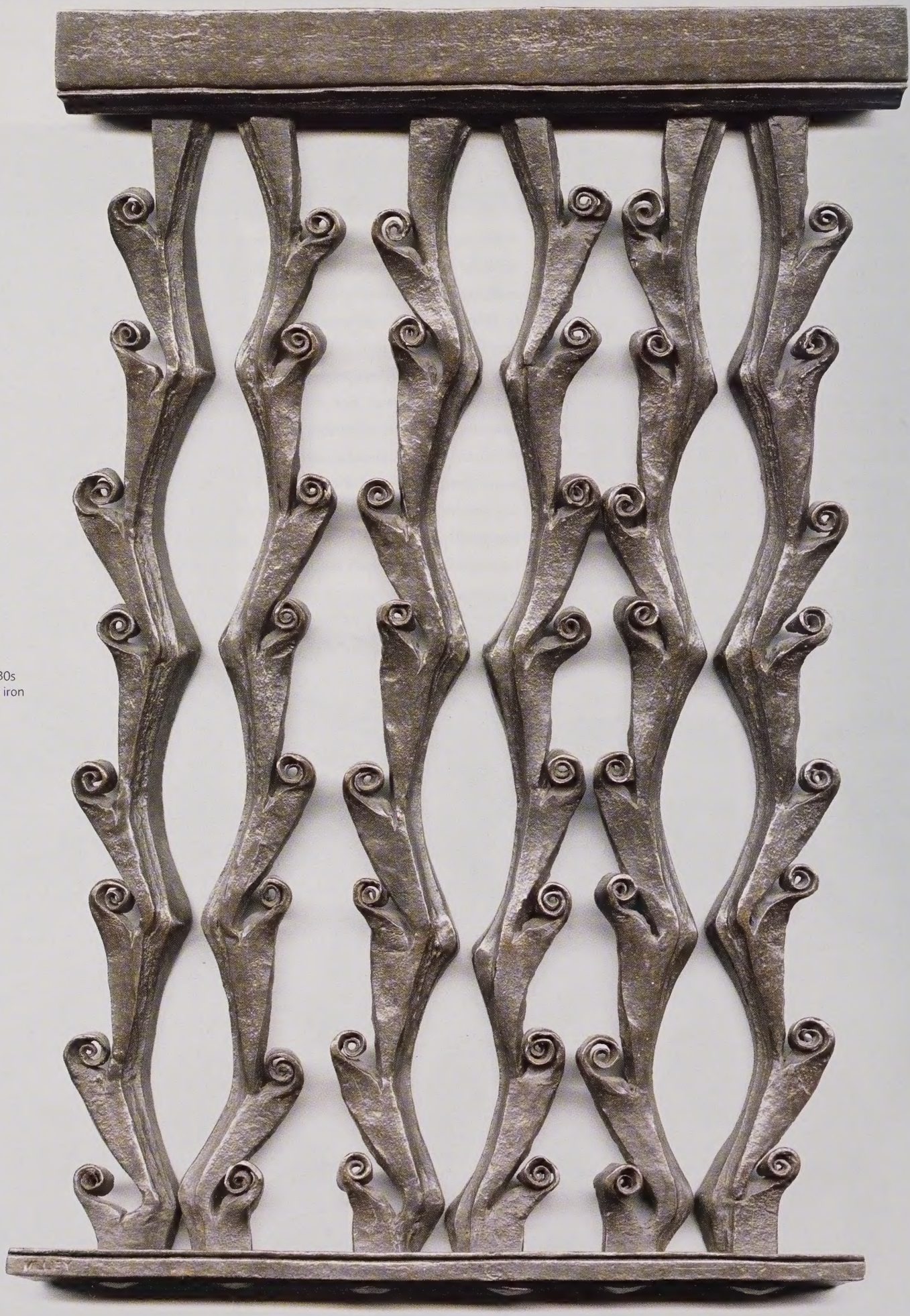
Aided by his own staff of draftsmen, Yellin insisted that working drawings be mounted to the wall so that he—along with clients, architects, and staff—could view them. This process allowed for developmental discussions of design elements, construction techniques, or changes to a commission. A period memo illuminates this process: "All drawings...when they are completed, must be hung up on the wall, so that Mr. Yellin can see everything without having to ask for drawings, in order that nothing may be overlooked."[5]

An entry he wrote for the Encyclopedia Britannica expresses a romantic materialism as well as a dedication to process.

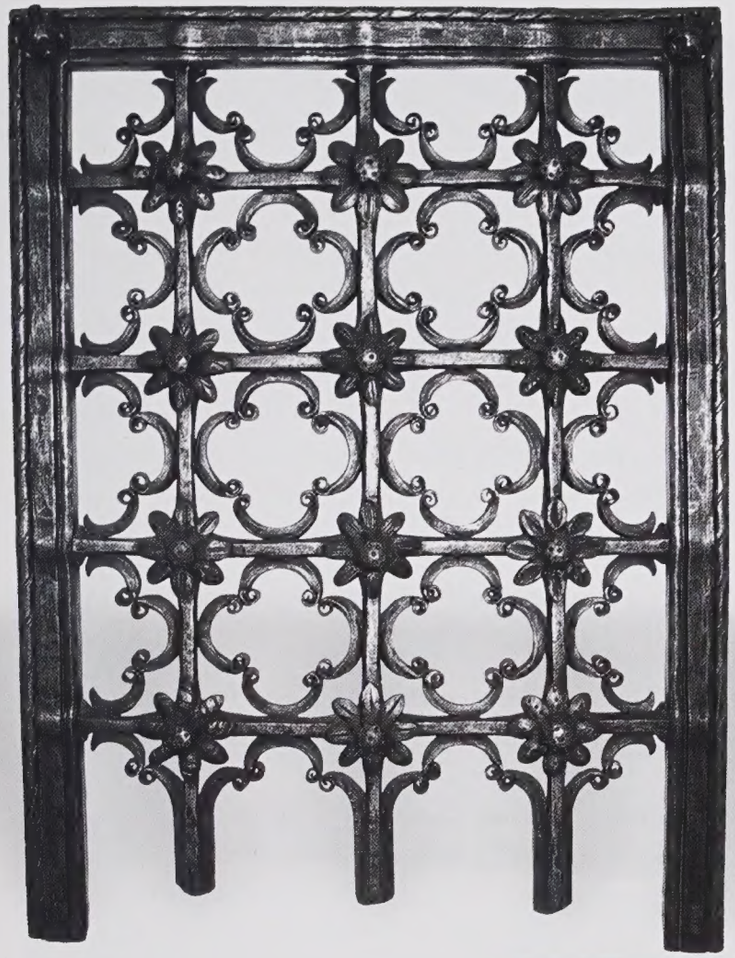
Yellin shop drawings were important communication tools, carrying the details of each piece from design through installation. But drawing alone was not sufficient for the self-proclaimed "metalworker." From both an aesthetic and practical standpoint, Yellin insisted that designs be worked out in metal. He acknowledged materiality intuitively and, as he matured professionally, had more opportunities to share his ideas with an appreciative audience.

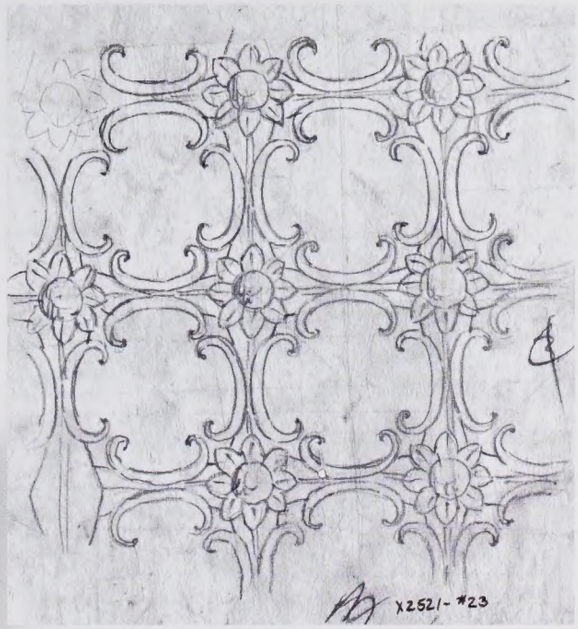


Vine Fragment, 1915
forged wrought iron
14 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 1 1/2"



Iron Sketch, 1930s
forged wrought iron
10 x 15 x 1"





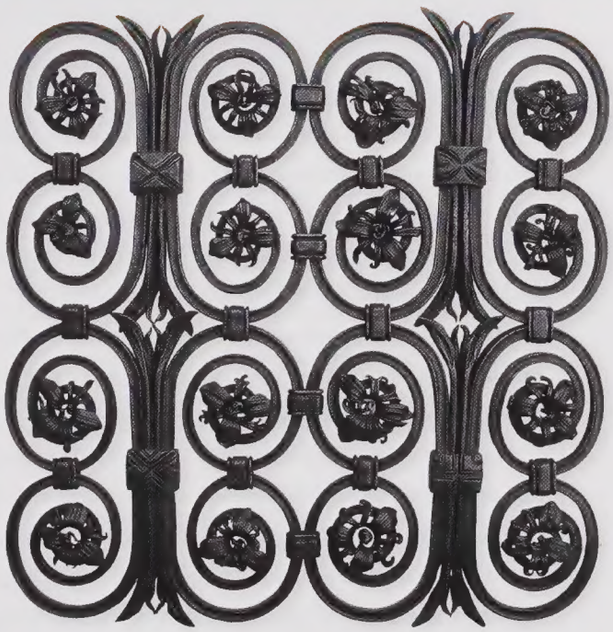
Yellin resisted the twentieth-century move toward separate, specialized tasks that would replace the nineteenth-century craftsman's skill.

An entry he wrote for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* expresses a romantic materialism as well as a dedication to process:

[A] real study of details can only be accomplished on the anvil....This actual study in the metal...can only come from a deep knowledge and love of the material. The making of beautiful ironwork cannot be fully described and illustrated on paper; it is often necessary for the craftsman to make sketches in iron.[6]

Such "sketches in iron" form a collection of sample design fragments that serve as a window into the artist's creative process. Harvey Yellin recalled his father explaining how working in three dimensions encouraged his creativity:

We made...many detailed drawings, but when I began to work them on the anvil, they shaped themselves quite differently from the way they appeared



clockwise from top left
Iron Sketch, 1930s
forged wrought iron
2 x 16 x 1"

Untitled Sketch, 1930s
pencil on vellum
8 1/2 x 11"

Iron Sketch, 1930s
forged wrought iron
19 x 21 x 1 1/2"
This study was for a gate at the Washington National Cathedral, Washington D.C., 1935.

Detail from *Iron Sketch* for Washington National Cathedral

in the original sketches. The creative spirit...like a winged thing...must have freedom in which to sing and soar.[7]

Yellin's studio benefited from the building boom that swept the country in the first years of the twentieth century, when studio craftsmen received unprecedented support and shared a common belief in basic aesthetic principles. Ruskin had warned against, "The suggestion of a mode of structure or support, other than the true one.... The painting of surfaces to represent some other material than that of which they actually consist.... The use of cast or machine-made ornament of any kind."[8] In American studios these forbidden practices were translated and discussed in positive terms of exposed or "honest" construction, truth to materials, and the inherent value of handwork.

Subscribing to the idea that craft work should foster "truth" about its material, Yellin chastised architectural practices that did not adhere to such principles. In 1925, in an article he wrote for the *Western Architect* that initiated an important dialog between craftsmen and architects, Yellin attempted to define a working relationship that would allow for a fruitful collaboration between them:

Is it right that metal should be modeled as clay—or as carved wood? Does it indicate that the material has been worked as that material should be worked? Does it indicate the craftsman's unashamed love for his material and for his method of working it? The answer is 'No.'[9]

Is it right that metal should be modeled as clay—or as carved wood? ...The answer is "No."

In the same article, Yellin explored the question of craftsmanship, calling for exposed or "honest" construction and concluding:

But what is real craftsmanship? Is it the designing and production of work by methods tricky and inventive that will make the public marvel...Or is it the working out of good design in proper materials, in an honest way?

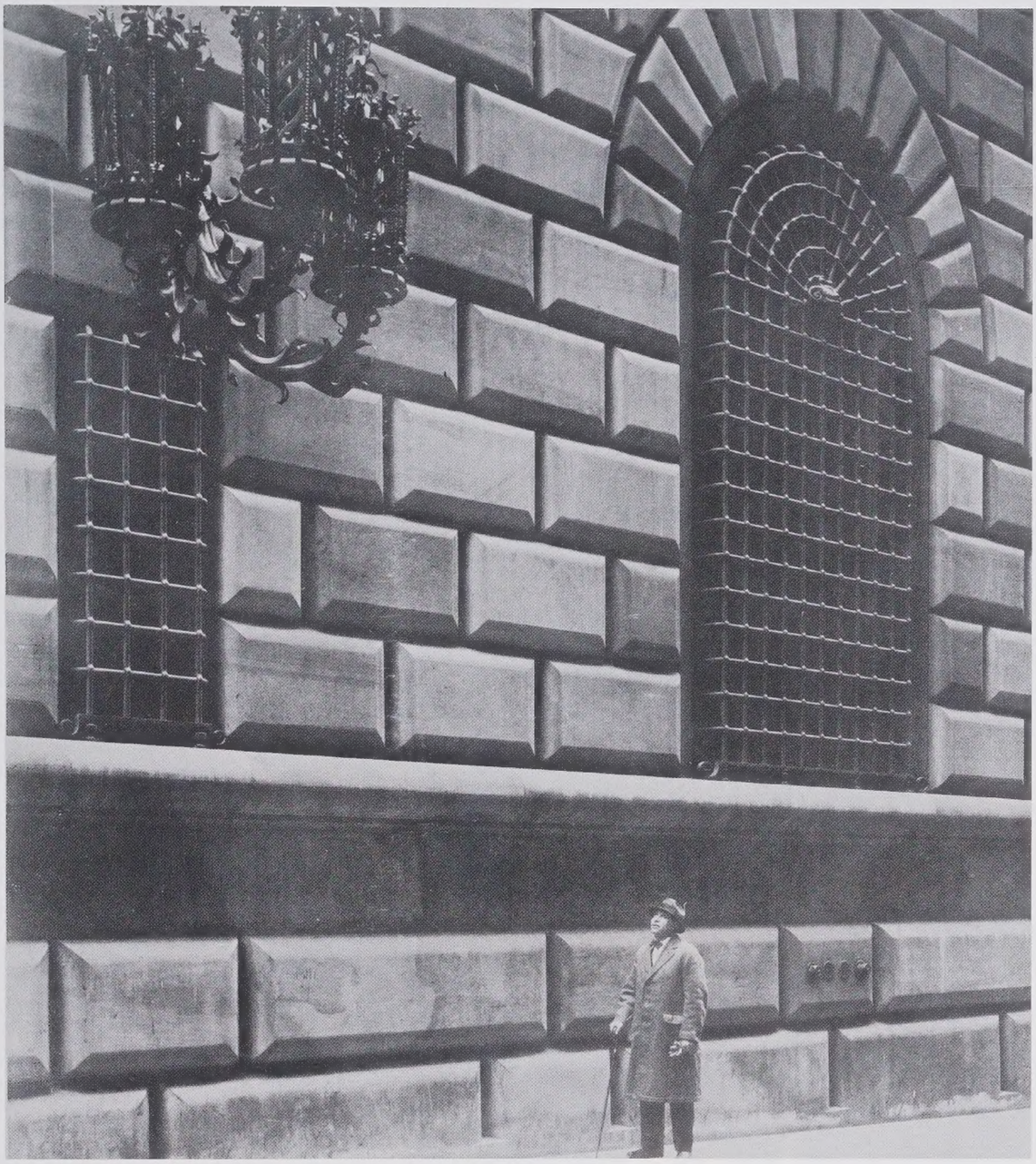
Part and parcel of the "honest way" of working out a design involved Yellin's method of solving problems in three dimensions. Overall concepts could be presented initially on paper, but Yellin insisted that refinements be worked out as a "sketch" in metal. "What is put on paper only indicates in general what is wanted....The real, artistic value of this work must be expressed *with the hammer* [original author's emphasis]." Placing such value on the expressive quality of handwork supported the idea that manual labor contributed to the authenticity of form (its "artistic value") and to the dignity of labor.[10]

Yellin resisted the twentieth-century move toward separate, specialized tasks that would replace the nineteenth-century craftsman's skill. During a period when the Ford Motor Company introduced the chain-driven assembly line, simplifying each worker's task and regulating the speed at which each performed, Yellin's shop retained the essence of individualized labor that characterized American studio craft, at least in theory.

A discussion of Samuel Yellin's *oeuvre* is not complete without mention of the ironwork he made for the Federal Reserve Bank. Throughout his career he completed several bank interiors, including Equitable Trust in 1926 and a beautiful tellers' screen for the Central Savings Bank, 1929. Yellin's work in the 1920s for the Federal Reserve was, perhaps, the largest commission of wrought iron ever created in the United States. To complete such a massive installation, he fashioned 200 *tons* of wrought iron, a feat that rivaled the output of many large factories of the day. Yellin's operation grew; he added a second building to the Arch Street complex and eventually employed more than 250 men.

The 1930s brought with it the Great Depression and a change in aesthetic preference that favored machined simplicity. As demand for Yellin's work declined, he kept as many smiths on the payroll as possible, diminishing his personal resources. At his death in 1940, Yellin left behind thousands of drawings and photographs and hundreds of "sketches in iron."

Samuel Yellin's emphasis on the materiality of his designs places him alongside Gustav Stickley and Annie Albers as an early master of the Studio Craft movement. The first generation of American craftsmen to make their mark on the new century would attempt to formulate a theory in which their work would be appreciated on a par with fine art, drawing from the theories of Ruskin and his disciple William Morris. These efforts coalesced into a movement that would sweep the nation into a new millennium. Theirs was a search for a true American style.



Samuel Yellin admiring his lights and grille work at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, New York City, 1925

While Samuel Yellin will be remembered for his masterful work in iron, he was adamant in his intellectual adherence to what I call the *Craftsman ideal*. In lectures and writing, Yellin translated this ideal into a language consistent with his own experience. At the height of his mature career, Yellin taught at the University of Pennsylvania, lectured at the Architectural Club of Chicago and Architectural League of New York, traveled to Europe, and consulted for the Philadelphia and Metropolitan museums. Yet he continually refined his persona as craftsman and underscored his identity by self-reference as a "blacksmith." In his insistence on design suited to function, his use of appropriate materials, and application of proper techniques, Yellin epitomized the search for a craftsman ideal. ⧗

Anna Fariello, an independent curator with Curatorial InSight, is co-editor of *Objects and Meaning*, forthcoming from Scarecrow Press.

1 Henry Havard, *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la decoration* (Paris, 1888-92) as quoted in Richard Wattenmaker, *Samuel Yellin in Context* (Flint, 1985).
2 C. Matlack Price, "A Modern Craftsman in Wrought Iron: Work that Rivals the Industrial Achievements of the Middle Ages," *The Craftsman* XXII, no. 6 (1912): 627-634.
3 Ruskin, "Treatment of Ornament," *Stones of Venice* numbered Artists Edition (NY: Merrill & Baker, 1851) 236.
4 Samuel Yellin, "Design and Craftsmanship," Architect Club of Chicago (lecture) 1926.
5 Samuel Yellin Metalworker, Memo, June 20, 1930.
6 Samuel Yellin, "Iron in Art," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1925; 14th ed. (1940) 679.
7 Harvey Yellin, 13.
8 John Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, numbered Artists Edition (NY: Merrill & Baker, n.d.) 39.
9 Samuel Yellin, "The Architect and the Craftsman," *Western Architect* (Sept. 1929), 93.
10 Yellin, 93.

All photographs courtesy Clare Yellin, Samuel Yellin Metalworkers.

Charles Supplee
Necklace with Pendant, 2001
14k gold, red coral, turquoise, sugulite, diamonds
9 1/2 x 5 1/4"

A Tradition of Change

Modern Native American Jewelry in the Southwest

by Lane Coulter

Long recognized for the ubiquitous turquoise and silver squash-blossom necklaces and concho belts, the traditional metalwork of the Southwest has been in flux for well over half a century. Jewelry and metal objects have been produced for both an Indian and a tourist market since the beginning of the twentieth century, and their popularity has witnessed the vagaries of travel, fashion, and the economy. During this same period, the cultures of those who produce this jewelry and those who consume it have changed.

Carl Clark
Bracelet, 2001
sterling silver, turquoise, coral, sugulite, lapis lazuli, black jet, shell
width 2 1/2"

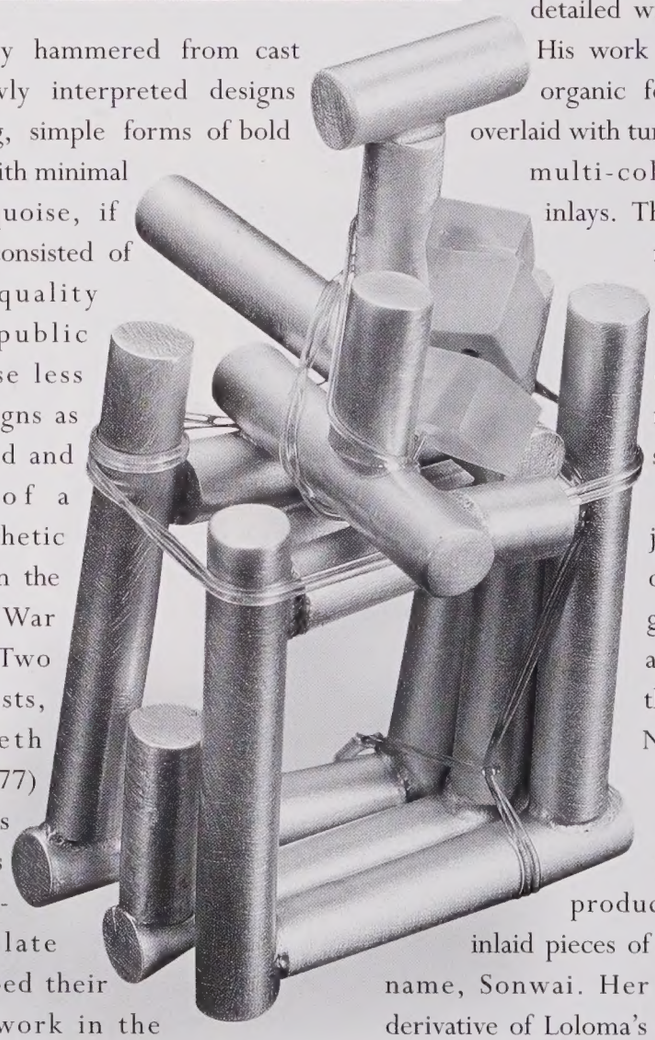
Artists from the tribes indigenous to the Southwest have produced jewelry work primarily in Arizona and New Mexico. The biggest tribe with the longest history of metalworking, the Navajo, live on a large reservation in the Four Corners area of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. The Pueblo tribes remain in their traditional communities, mostly in New Mexico, where there are different pueblos speaking four distinct languages. Hopi, another Pueblo tribe, is located on three mesas in northern Arizona. Acoma Pueblo in western New Mexico was built a thousand years ago and is certainly the oldest continually inhabited village in this country. Well known for their lapidary skills, the major jewelry-making pueblos are the Zuni in far western New Mexico and Santo Domingo Pueblo south of Santa Fe. Many of today's contemporary jewelers have migrated to urban areas or the art centers of Phoenix, Albuquerque, or Santa Fe.

Beginning about 1870, the Navajos began to create filed and stamped silver jewelry based on technology acquired from Spanish-American silversmiths (*plateros*). Twenty years later they began to bezel set native cut turquoise stones in their pieces. The Pueblo people learned their metalsmithing skills from the Navajos around the turn of the nineteenth century and produced the same style of work. Starting about 1900, reservation traders and curio dealers throughout the Southwest began to promote Navajo and Pueblo turquoise and silver jewelry and metalwork, including souvenir spoons, to their tourist clientele.

Over the past 100 years, native jewelry has experienced several boom markets. The 1970s were a peak market period and the popularity of the style created such a tremendous demand that imported copies and reproductions became rampant, giving the jewelry a bad name for being inexpensive and poorly made. Fortunately, a collector base developed for the most sophisticated and creative work that encouraged a younger generation of smiths to pursue their vision of native jewelry.

Some of the silverwork that first demonstrated a departure from the traditional designs in the Southwest was that promoted by Ambrose Roanhorse, a Navajo silversmith teaching at the government Indian School in Santa Fe during the late 1930s. Roanhorse espoused a return to traditional methods such as using sheet silver laboriously hammered from cast ingots. His newly interpreted designs demanded strong, simple forms of bold lines enhanced with minimal stamping. Turquoise, if used, generally consisted of single, high quality stones. The public perceived these less decorative designs as artfully inspired and reflective of a Modernist aesthetic that flourished in the booming post-War War II years. Two pioneering artists, Navajo Kenneth Begay (1913-1977) in the late 1940s and Charles Loloma (1921-1991) in the late 1950s, developed their own modern work in the resort town of Scottsdale, Arizona. With Frank Lloyd Wright's Arizona Biltmore hotel nearby and his Taliesin Studios north of town, the sophisticated audience for their contemporary native metalwork was readily available and highly receptive.

Roanhorse espoused a return to traditional methods such as using sheet silver laboriously hammered from cast ingots.



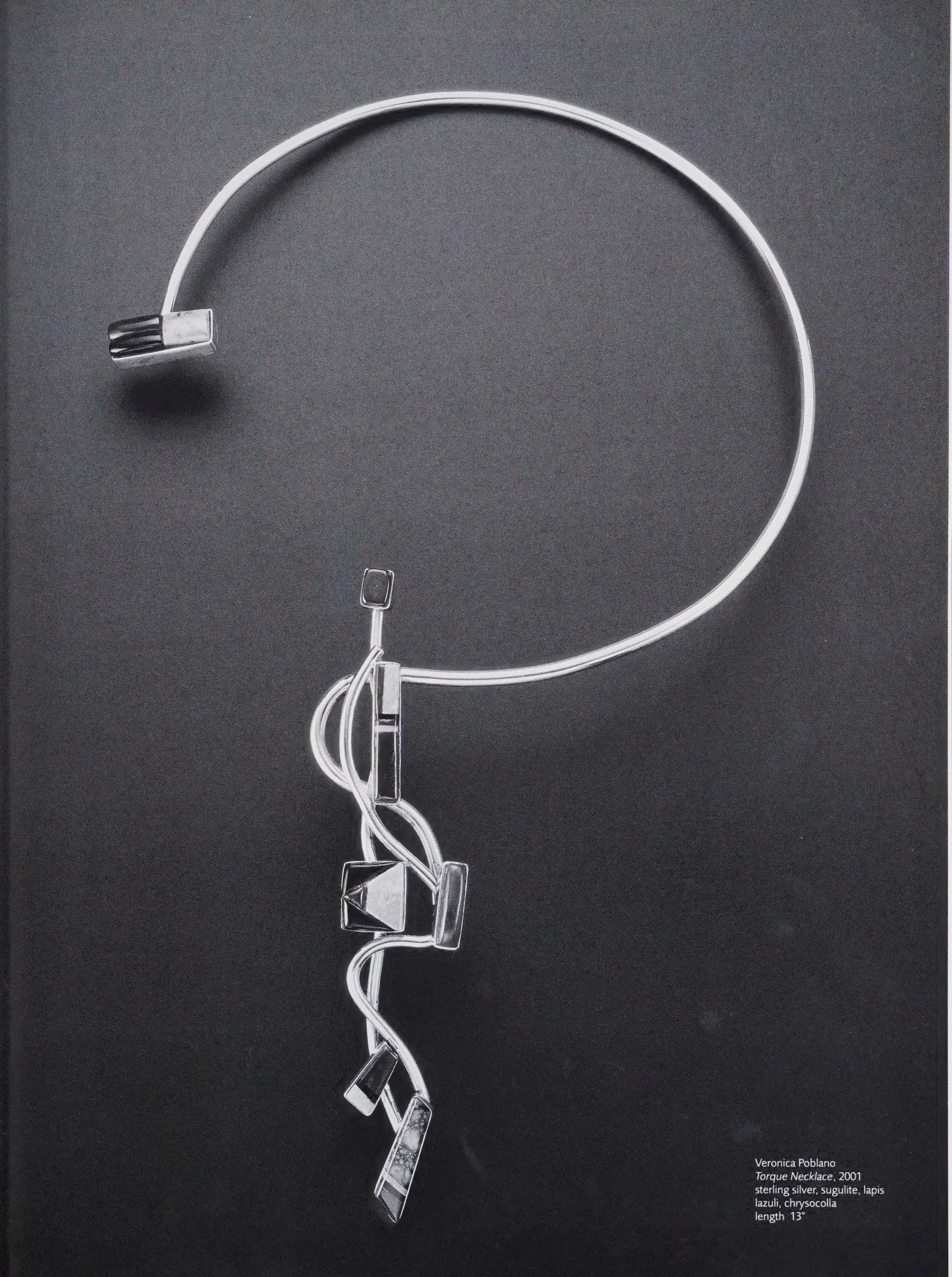
Dylan Poblano
"Mondrian" Stackable Ring, 2001
sterling silver, turquoise, quartz crystal, monofilament
1 3/4 x 1 1/8"

Traditionally trained but known for his elegant modern designs, Begay produced holloware commissions and flatware sets, along with silver jewelry embellished with polished desert ironwood or quality turquoise, out of his retail shop in Scottsdale. Loloma, at first a painter and ceramist, had studied at the School for American Craftsman at Alfred University before he began working in metal. Loloma's innovations included the use of new materials, fossilized ivory, natural tufa stone cast textures, diamonds, gold, rosewood, and raised and exaggerated chunk inlays. These new materials, in combination with his novel use of form, gave rise to a whole genre embraced by younger native jewelers.

Preston Monongye (1927-1987) became the third pioneer in the mid-1960s working in tufa stone casting that retained its coarse, sandy texture detailed with raised line drawings. His work featured highly unusual organic forms, often inlayed or overlaid with turquoise beads or polished multi-colored stone on stone inlays. These three mid-century metalsmiths provided the impetus and freedom for other Native jewelers to experiment with a new repertoire of stones, shells, and textures.

Several Native jewelers with familial or other ties to these three groundbreaking smiths are currently working in the Southwest. Verma Nequatewa, Charles Loloma's niece, worked with him for nearly 20 years. Today she produces beautifully crafted inlaid pieces of jewelry under her Hopi name, Sonwai. Her pieces are somewhat derivative of Loloma's chunk inlay work of the late 1970s, but display a different palette.

Harvey Begay, son of Kenneth Begay and trained by him, has made a vigorous effort *not* to

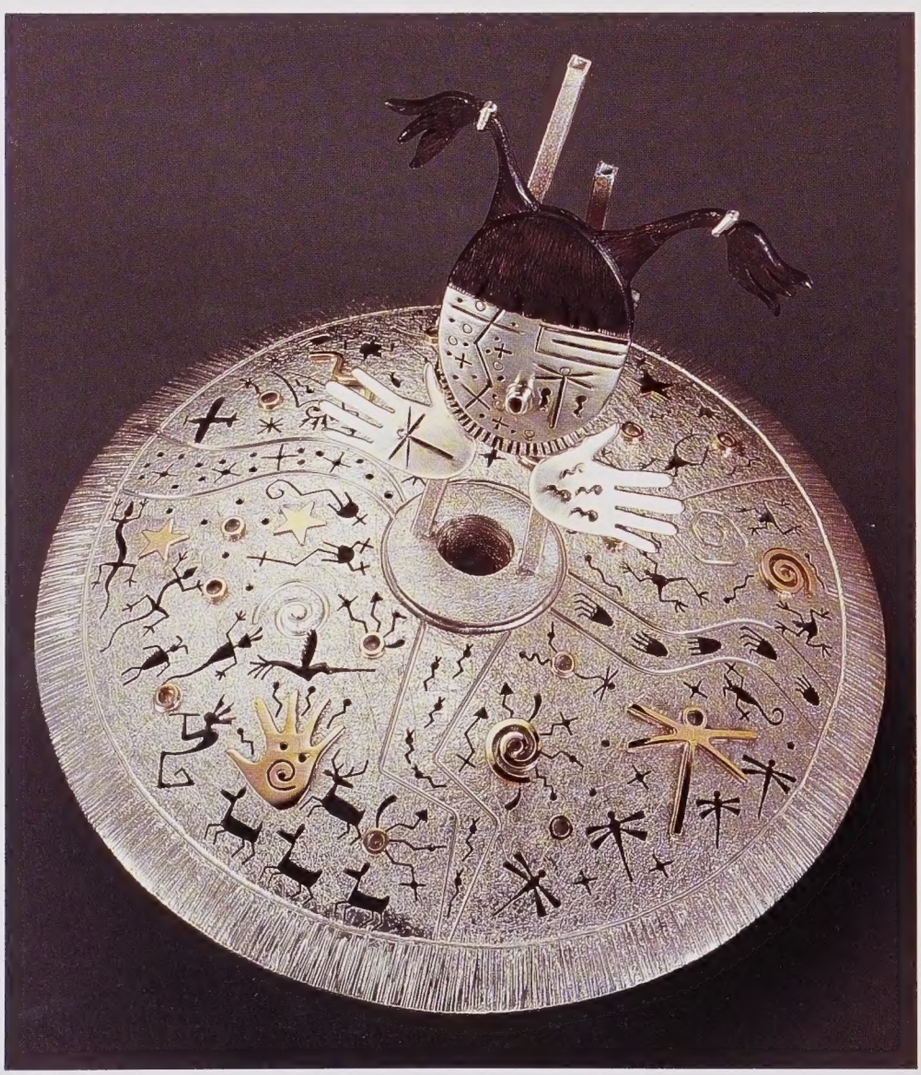


Veronica Poblano
Torque Necklace, 2001
sterling silver, sugulite, lapis lazuli, chrysocolla
length 13"

Jesse Monongye
Landscape Belt Buckle, 2001
gold, lapis lazuli, pearl, opal, coral, obsidian, sugulite
3 x 2"

base his imagery on his father's designs. He has, however, retained a strong sense of form and is deft at working with the traditional tufa stone casting, in this case in 14k gold. The textured surfaces and the color of the gold contrast with the multiple coral cabochon sets.

Myron Panteah
Impressed Clown, 2001
sterling silver, 14k gold
4 7/8 x 4 1/2"



Jesse Monongye, who worked with his father Preston, has developed his own personal design niche. One of the few Native jewelers to create true pictorial stone inlays, he has focused on marvelous night sky images that often include the planet Saturn with its rings, shooting stars, and a crescent moon. His landscape belt buckle uses fire opal to beautifully simulate the snowy crags of his lapis mountain range. The perfection he brings to these extremely difficult inlays is nothing short of amazing.

Some Native American smiths have been influenced by various aspects of historic Southwestern silverwork and find it a challenging resource. Other jewelers have ties to their family heritage of jewelry making and look to longstanding family traditions for inspiration.

Mike Bird-Romero of San Juan Pueblo has long had an interest in Southwestern jewelry and metalwork, even trying his hand at reproducing some of the more challenging early works and designing innumerable variations on nineteenth-century Pueblo silver crosses. In one instance he fabricated a bracelet in the classic revival style promoted by Ambrose Roanhorse, but chose to set it with an exaggerated long opal matrix stone.

Edison Cummings, an accomplished Navajo silversmith, often produces holloware and flatware along with his jewelry designs. His awareness of the work of his predecessors is evident in the flatware set that is a modern variation of a set commissioned by the Elkus

family in 1933 and made by Navajo smiths Frank Charley and Eckley Yazzie, now in the collection of the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Cummings features the same yeibechai stamp on the handles but also includes chevron-stamping in the style of Kenneth Begay.

Veronica Poblano is the daughter of Leo Poblano (1905-1959), a famed Zuni Pueblo lapidary from a pueblo known more for its stone carving than for metalwork. Her *Torque Necklace* (2001), an ornate line drawing in commercial silver wire, is mounted with 10 hand-cut cabochons. It reflects the relative importance traditionally given to the gemstones by this pueblo, although here they are set in a contemporary format.

The world of Native American art is replete with family lineages—artists who learned their craft from family members, a trait no longer common in the dominant culture. Generations of Navajo, Pueblo, and Hopi silversmiths who were trained at an early age continue to ply their trade throughout the Southwest. Today, many Native metalsmiths from the Southwest have attended the Institute of American Indian Arts or taken a course or two at the Navajo Community College. Others have pursued BFA and MFA degrees at universities throughout the United States and have been exposed to and adapted such non-traditional techniques as mokume, roller printing, reticulation, and raising into their repertoires.

Can these non-traditional techniques be used to express Native American imagery? How are these cultural expressions exemplified? A difficult problem. One that has these talented smiths walking a tightrope every day in the studio. Of course, all artists work with internal personal memories or images that may elude the viewer, but some Native American images or symbols are quite overt, if not hackneyed, such as the feather, the buffalo, and the arrow, among others. Most contemporary Native metalsmiths have rejected these stereotypical images, unless of course they use them for cultural commentary. So, what is fresh in the world of Indian jewelry in the Southwest? How do they connect with their cultures in the twenty-first century? Some of these artists rely on traditional techniques but use a new approach to the graphic content, while others utilize traditional images with contemporary techniques. Other Native smiths find that working with traditional techniques in fresh ways gives them the opportunity to explore changes within a recognizable boundary.

Charlene L. Reano
Santo Domingo Thunderbird Reiteration Necklace, 2001
sterling silver, copper (mokume gane)
length 12 1/2"
Collection of the artist

Mike Bird-Romero
Cuff, 2001
sterling silver, opal matrix
2 5/8 x 2 3/8 x 2"

Ric Charlie is an excellent example of an artist who updates a traditional technique. He uses the old form of casting into locally mined tufa stone, a compressed volcanic pumice rock. Traditionally, the technique was a means of producing multiple copies of a form

Charlene Sanchez Reano
Reversible Sandwich Inlay Necklace, 1999
shell, mother-of-pearl, gold
length 19"

by carving a triangular cross section or half round shape that was readily separated from the stone mold. Instead, Ric Charlie carves the stone mold in perfect right angles like a milling machine in order to create his crisp angular, raised, linear designs. As a result, the mold breaks when removing the casting, creating a one-of-a-kind object that he then inlays or colors with chemical patinas. In addition to retaining the natural texture of the stone mold, he often uses abstracted mask images or more realistic landscapes in his work.

Charlene Sanchez Reano utilizes the traditional lapidary techniques and materials common to her husband's home village of Santa Domingo Pueblo in New Mexico. By overlaying patterns of bits of colored stones and shells cemented to shell backing plates, Ms. Reano has developed striking linear forms that, when strung as a necklace, create additional new shapes. Her use of these traditional techniques alludes to the economic and cultural heritage of the Pueblo and references age-old trading routes to the Gulf of California.

Norbert Peshlakai's small silver box is almost completely covered in deeply stamped hieroglyphics and the lid displays a delightful line of jackrabbits. The technique, stamping, reflects Peshlakai's Navajo heritage but is far removed from the conventional surface designs of serrated crescents, triangles, and leaf forms. The L–shaped malachite knob is a modern touch as well. Incidentally, Peshlakai is the Navajo word for silversmith!

These traditional techniques are used in a fresh way to express two ideas simultaneously. First, they give cultural respect to the past... the old way...the way of the elders and teachers, and secondly, they convey to the informed viewer the heritage of the maker, regardless of the modern image that may be depicted.

Another way contemporary Southwestern jewelers have approached cultural expression is through reinterpreting traditional images in novel ways. Charles Supplee references his Hopi roots with remarkable lapidary renditions of corn combined with contemporary metalwork in gold. Navajo jewelers Carl and Irene Clark use thousands of pieces of stone to create their micro-fine inlay images of traditional yeibechai figures. What an over-the-top lapidary tour de force!

Ric Charlie
Chanting Dance Bracelet, 2001
14k gold, Carico Lake turquoise, lapis lazuli, sugulite
width 2 1/2"

Myron Panteah's *Impressed Clown* is a shallow vessel in silver that represents a wonderful Zuni kiva or religious space with its traditional ladder that enables emergence into the world. The surface is decorated with piercings of Zuni pottery water symbols—the dragonfly and tadpoles—along with bear tracks and deer. The humorous dance clown is also a removable brooch.

In these times of rapid change and globalization, the values associated with cultural identity become increasingly important.

Charlene L. Reano, from a jewelry making family at Santa Domingo Pueblo, has taken the image of a popular Depression-era thunderbird necklace from her tribal home—one that was initially crafted of inexpensive recycled materials. The original was made from various colored plastic detritus along with turquoise chips left over from grinding beads, all cemented to pieces of old black phonograph records or car battery cases to create a cheap saleable jewelry piece that remained popular through the 1950s. Reano has carefully recreated the form in silver and a variegated mokume gane pattern. The results speak of the history of jewelry in her Pueblo as well as her skills as a metalsmith and designer.

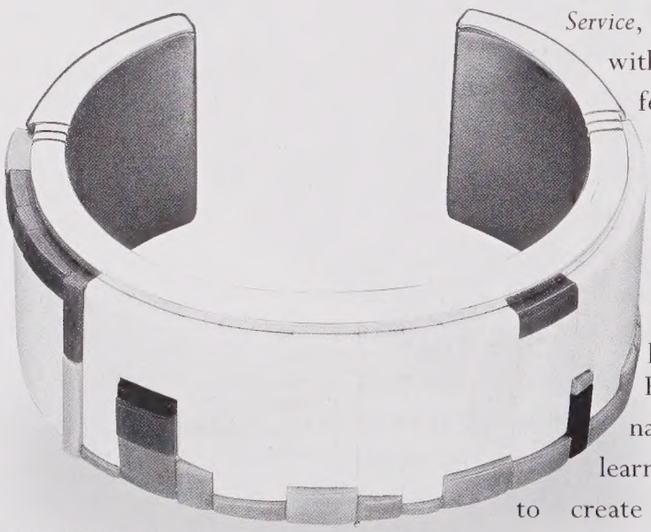
All of these artists have found an amazing variety of ways to incorporate traditional native

Harvey Begay
Bracelet, 2001
14k gold, coral
width 2 5/8"

Verma Nequatewa
Three Bracelets, mid-1990s
18k gold, coral, sugulite, turquoise, lapis lazuli, malachite, serpentine, fossilized ivory, teak, ebony, onyx
width 3"

images into their metalwork. The objects communicate to us about the culture that they represent while the materials and/or techniques often reflect twenty-first-century innovation. We are fortunate that they can find their way through the complex gauntlet of Then and Now.

Other Southwestern metalsmiths who reference native imagery in their work include Linda Lou Metoxin, Cheyenne Harris, and the team of Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson. Metoxin, in her magnificent *Deer Hunter Coffee Service*, utilizes hunter figures with abstracted hollow-formed deer for handles. They are quite similar in proportion and detail to the traditional "heartline deer" often found painted on Zuni Pueblo pottery. Few native silversmiths have learned the skills required to create holloware, although Kenneth Begay was commissioned to make several tea and coffee sets in the 1950s and 1960s. Cheyenne Harris's *Ongodagweh's (baby) Spoon*, created in silver and gold, carries depictions of six Longhouses that symbolize the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Although Harris is Navajo, her knowledge of native symbolism from other tribes allows her to recognize the design possibilities. The spoon was made as a gift for the child of an Iroquois couple.



Richard I. Chavez
Bracelet, 2001
sterling silver, dolomite, coral, turquoise, black jade
width 2 3/4"

Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson, a Pueblo and Navajo collaboration, have worked together designing and fabricating elegant jewelry for at least 25 years. Utilizing their carefully selected and hoarded cache of unique picture jasper cabochons, they have created three beautiful buckles with integral southwestern landscapes or landform images. This exemplifies their reverence for the landscape that has often provided them with design concepts throughout their career. The buckles are further enhanced for the wearer by the intriguing, secret drawings pierced on the silver backing plates.

Four Native American artists whose work is removed from either traditional techniques or images are Richard Chavez, Preston Duwyenie, Eugene Nelson, and Dylan Poblano. Chavez, from San Felipe Pueblo, north of Albuquerque, has worked with clean, spare motifs during most of his long career as a jeweler. His bracelet is carefully inlayed in a stone-on-stone technique in as many as six colors. Even so, it has a very minimalist, painterly quality. The unusual white dolomite stones replicate the vast openness of a plain gessoed canvas, allowing the subtle

gradations of the coral to enliven the form.

Preston Duwyenie, of Hopi decent, is known both as a jeweler and ceramic artist. For nearly 10 years he has been combining these skills primarily in graceful pottery forms enhanced with textured silver insertions. A set of three elegant pottery vases features different subtle clay slips in cream, burnished white, and a sparkling black micaceous surface. The addition of the textured silver cuttlefish-cast stoppers shaped like the head ornaments, called tabletas, traditionally worn by Hopi women dancers, give the vessels an anthropomorphic quality.

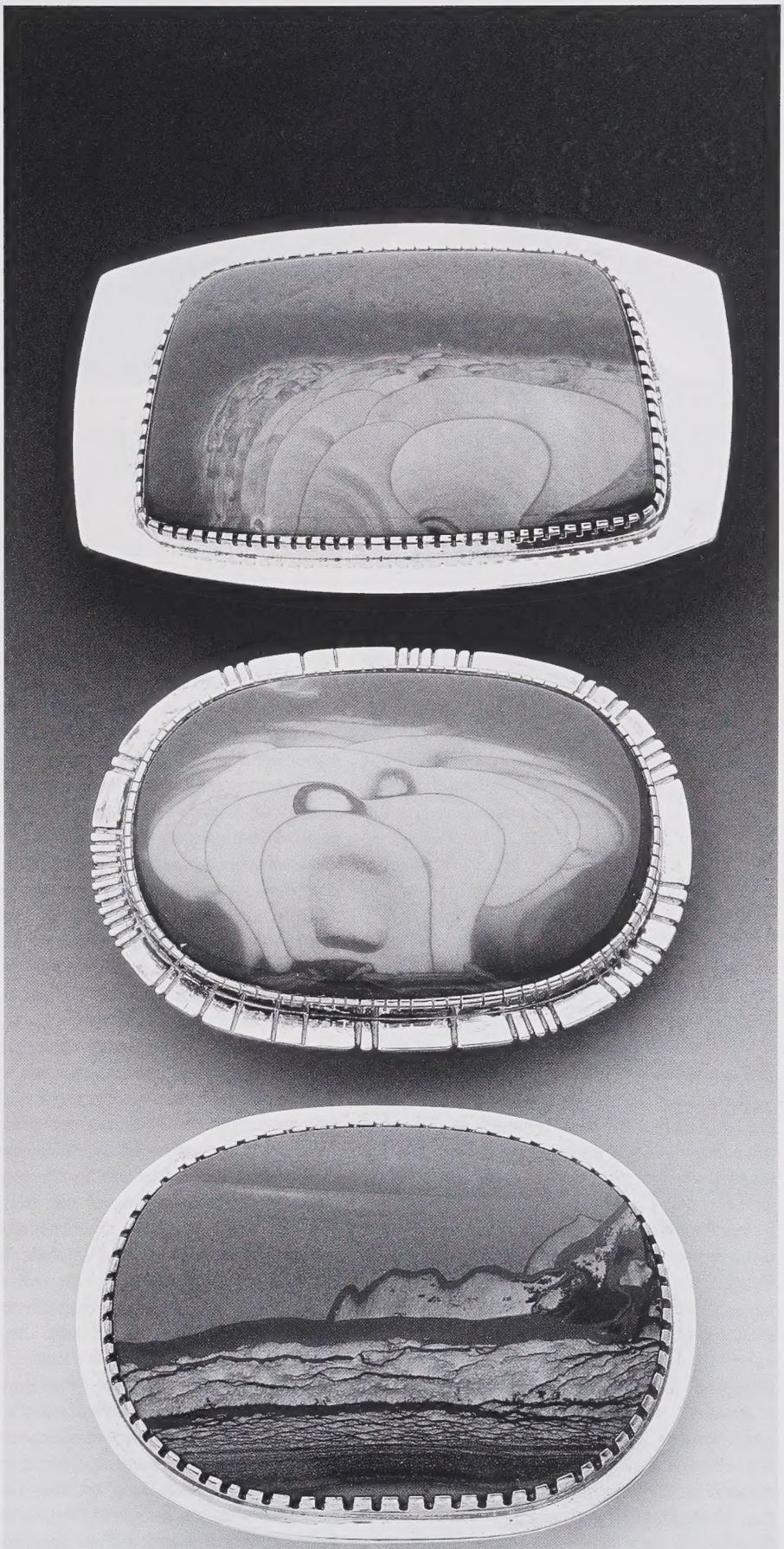
Dylan Poblano is the grandson of esteemed Zuni carver Leo Poblano and a remarkable young designer. His *"Mondrian" Stackable Ring* (2001), may represent the antithesis of Zuni jewelry, which is typically set with dozens of clustered turquoise stones. In this piece, only the balanced cube of turquoise connects the piece to Poblano's native Southwest.

In these times of rapid change and globalization, the values associated with cultural identity become increasingly important. As artists, culture matters, and these Native American jewelers have found a place for their heritage in the designing and fabrication of their art. Years ago, outsiders searched for authenticity and primitivism in the art of tribal people. Today there is a fresh perspective, a respect for the cross-cultural challenges that inform the work of contemporary Native metalsmiths. The work simultaneously values the heritage of the artists and accepts their innovative ideas and exceptional skills.

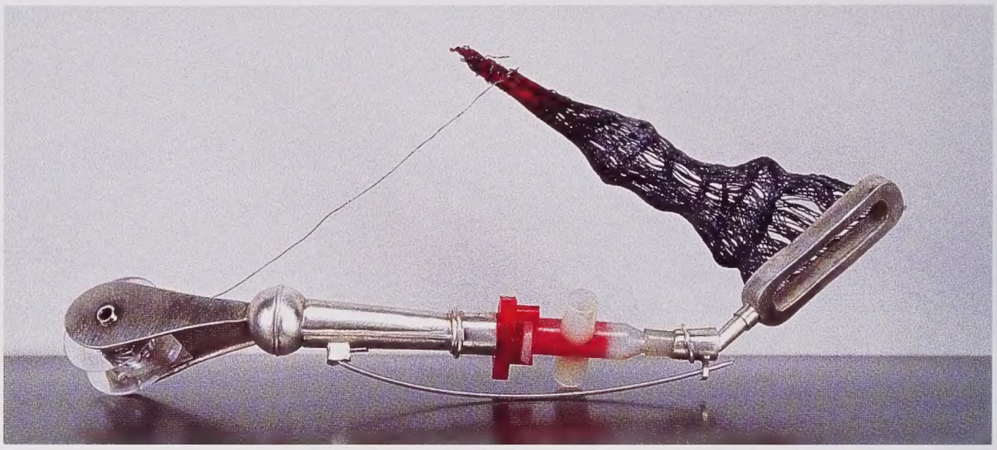
The more you know about the Southwest and the cultures of the artists that produce its metalwork, the more intriguing, complex, and meaningful the work becomes. Their continuing pursuit of thoughtful, inventive designs will bring greater depth to our understanding of the Modern in Native American jewelry. ⧗

Lane Coulter is a long time metalsmith, teacher, curator, and antique dealer, and former professor of jewelry at the Institute for American Indian Arts.

All images courtesy the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, from the 2002 exhibition catalogue, *Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation 1, Contemporary Native American Art from the Southwest*, edited by David Revere McFadden and Ellen Napiura Taubman.



Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson
Three Buckles, mid-1990's
Landscape Rocky butte, sterling silver, gold
widths 3 1/8"; 2 1/2"; 2 3/8"



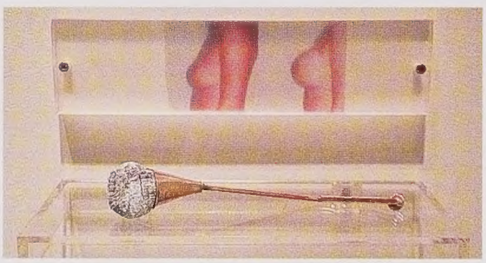
"DIANE FIELD: EVOLUTION"

E. AVERY DRAPER SHOWCASE
DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE
CONTEMPORARY ARTS, WILMINGTON
25 FEBRUARY-18 MAY, 2003

by CHRISTINE TATE

"Diane Field: Evolution" features 18 metal, enamel, and mixed-media works in the delightfully intimate E. Avery Draper Showcase gallery at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts in Wilmington. This exhibition, with a thought-provoking title that calls to mind both biological adaptation and the artist's own development, includes work inspired by Field's study of plastic surgery instruments and photographs, and her examination of the physical, psychological, and social motivations for modifications of the body, which have now exceeded the medically necessary and become Americans' means of individual evolution. Though most of this jewelry is not wearable, all of it is intriguing and impressively crafted, and much of it is provocative and witty.

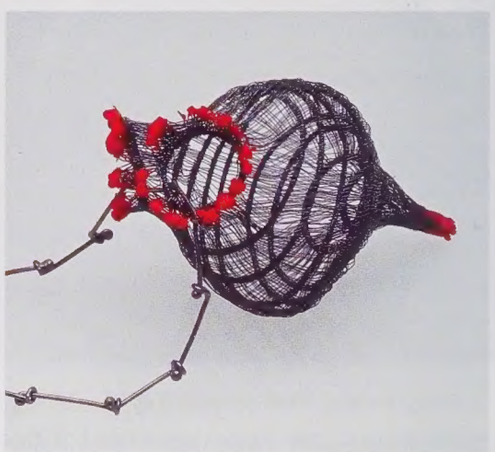
"Evolution" is divided into three related groups. The first and most self-evidently linked to the exhibition's title and concept is comprised of six fantastical medical devices fabricated in silver with enameled wire accents. Each is displayed on a clear Plexiglas shelf, through which the object's distorted shadow is cast onto the wall below. Related before and after photographs of real surgical patients—most of them women—are mounted beneath thick blocks of Plexiglas above each shelf. Field has invented appliances designed for various bodily alterations (or mutations), including the inescapable (breast enhancement, [lipo]suction, and face lifting), the less obvious (hair replacement), and the sado-masochistically whimsical (nasal rasping). While the photographs lead one to question the benefits of such procedures, the implements themselves call attention to the invasiveness of plastic surgery and its artificiality; the devices' shadows add a melodramatic, even ghoulish touch to their presence. At the same time, these objects are manifestly beautiful—crafted with great skill and care, embellished with rich colors, and enhanced with lustrous surfaces—and the contrast between their aesthetic appeal and the revulsion many viewers feel at contemplating the



mechanics of their imaginary implementation is both disconcerting and comical.

The second group of objects in the exhibition includes five mixed-media pieces on opaque metal shelves with cognate photographs—in this case, single, color, 35-millimeter contact prints suspended in glass—hanging to the right of each piece. These gadgets include found elements—some recognizable (sewing machine bobbin, accordion syringe) and some indeterminate—in addition to the same silver and enameled wire employed in the first group. Not all of these items are overtly medical, though the titles of the *Cake Decorator* and *Bubble Blower* imply that they are designed to modify and/or beautify, and not all of the companion images are literal representations of the devices' purposes. As the uses, methods, and meanings of these works are less apparent, they demand more of the observer's imagination, invite longer contemplation, and reward the sedulous viewer with additional amusement. One of the most evocative pieces in this set, *Knee Hammer*, looks something like a wire windsock affixed to an ornate recumbent handle. The piece functions as a link between the surgical appliances of the first group, the more chimerical combinations of the second, and the enamel-tipped wire compositions of the third.

The final group consists of seven pendants on long, fine, hand-forged chains of various designs. These are the only plainly wearable works in the exhibition, and they are distinct in structure and appearance. Loosely hung by their chains and resting on small transparent Plexiglas shelves, the pendants are constructed of dark strands of metal, intricately wound and layered, and adorned with brightly colored enamel highlights. Again, not all of these pieces make direct references to evolution, but their slightly irregular organic forms evoke a sense of the process of transformation, as if they were caught and frozen at specific points in time and would have looked different had they been captured earlier or later. One piece, *Baby Heart*, appears to be both a



likeness of a heart and a vessel for one about the size of a plum—and roughly the shape of a beet (pun intended?)—with a pointed, root-like bottom and twin flared open tops (an aorta and a pulmonary artery?), all tipped in vivid (blood?) red. Like the other pieces in this group, its shape is built up with rings of wire; those rings, in turn, are held together by innumerable parallel metal threads of the same color. Several of these pendants call to mind the hair rollers (sans brushes) popular in the 1950s, and one wonders if they are a playful reference to an era of more harmless kinds of self-alteration when the pain involved in "beauty [that] must suffer" was little more than sleeping on curlers. If so, it is not the only subtle witticism to be found in this collection of elegant trinkets with multivalent meanings.

Christine Tate teaches art history at the Delaware College of Art and Design, where she also serves as Academic Studies Area Coordinator.

clockwise from left
Breast Enlargement Tool, 2003
sterling silver, enamel
8 1/2 x 1 3/8 x 1 3/4"
Photo: Terrence Roberts

Knee Hammer, 2001
silver, steel, enamel
6 1/4 x 2 3/4 x 3/4"

Baby Heart, 2002
enamel, steel
2 x 2 x 2 3/4"

"MYRA MIMLITSCH-GRAY: CONFLATION"

THE SYBARIS GALLERY, ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN
MARCH 15-APRIL 26, 2003

by SUSAN HOLT

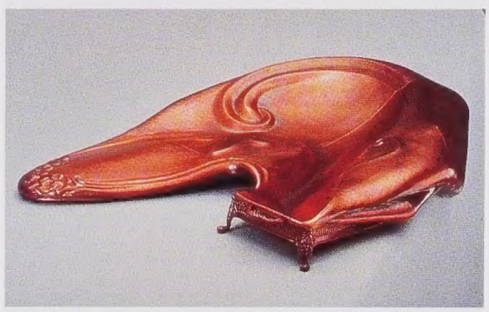
In her show of recent but diverse work Myra Mimlitsch-Gray conflates idea, image, and craft. All finished within the last two years, this body of work is developmentally significant if not tightly focused. The installation is intended to evoke the artist's studio with works-in-progress. The in-progress here is conceptual, not material. Rather than traditional pedestals or vitrines, most of the work is arrayed on raw tabletops supported by sawhorses. Initially disorienting, this presentation alludes to the work's historical sources in domestic, utilitarian objects. The approach continues Mimlitsch-Gray's strategy of reconfiguring domestic objects for various aesthetic ends.

Two large copper wall pieces and a *Planished Rectangular Tray* revisit previous territory, although *Four Roses* is the beginning of a departure. Rather than being comprised of individually enlarged planishing marks, its center consists of groups of three hammer blows, while the surround is freely rendered repoussage. The piece is an effectively monumental and somewhat frightening rendition of hand-wrought kitsch. The ashtray's patina, a consequence of process, creates a genuine olfactory illusion. Surprisingly, this piece does not exhibit the seamless craftsmanship for which Mimlitsch-Gray is consistently admired. Instead, she has allowed herself a technical freedom that portends new directions.

Most notably, this newfound flexibility has generated the show's quiet centerpiece, *Chafing Dish*. Big, even for Mimlitsch-Gray, this free flowing, semi-abstract work incorporates a commercial object that the artist did not carefully craft. Too large to be traditionally worked on a stake, it took on form spontaneously as it grew. No attempt was made to hide or even mitigate the seams, which appear to have been placed where needed without forethought. It is unclear whether the found chafing dish is disgorging its contents or melting and reforming into some manic blob of recollected decoration. Ultimately, it oozes over the edge of the table and is prevented from slipping onto the carpet by the tug of ornament, the memory of its history. Removed from explicit context, lacking utility, and marginally crafted, this object exists as a query. It raises, and conflates, issues of boundary, definition, meaning, and quality. Should it be understood as sculpture or as sculptural? The piece itself is necessarily silent on that question but speaks of a definitive change in the artist's perspective.

The flashy eye-catchers of the show are *Melting Candelabrum* and *Candelabrum: Seven Fragments*. Both, in polished sterling, return to meticulous craftsmanship but retain fluidity in form and intent. *Candelabrum: Seven Fragments*, the more effective piece, dissolves into multiple, melting parts, pools of quicksilver, erasing the distinction between deflation and emergence. According to the artist, viewers can arrange the fragments at will, and "can attempt to realize a proper setting," but "their proper placement is open-ended: their asymmetry and unconventional, proportional relationships disturb the point of reference." That original point of reference, a tightly defined utility and social space, needs to be folded into an understanding of the work for it to be other than an abstraction. Where and how the work is displayed will influence the efficacy of its paradoxical status. Sited in a formal dining room it will be a different beast than in, say, a museum case. The artist states, "I want the final form to represent an anxious or exaggerated state of an otherwise inert object." But that anxiety can be fungible and contingent. This is less a criticism than an acknowledgement that Mimlitsch-Gray is bridging dialogs without specifying which she prefers or prefers the viewer to prefer. A significant aspect of the work is, in fact, the degree to which multiple discourses are embraced and traversed without eliminating pertinent distinctions. It functions within and between simultaneously.

Additional work underscores the varied thinking and working processes. Several copper pieces titled variously only hint at candelabra. They appeal as autonomous objects and sit squarely between *Chafing Dish* and *Candelabrum: Seven Fragments* in methodology. What is interesting to note is that all were made in the same short time frame, as were preliminary drawings and post hoc encaustics included in the show. Artists are frequently encouraged to exhibit a coherent body of work. The cohesive fragments are here but need to be excavated further to uncover Myra Mimlitsch-Gray's future direction. To show it thus taking shape displays some courage on the artist's part. What is remarkable is that the loose ends, multiple takes, conceptual meditations, and disparate deliberations all result in such strong work.

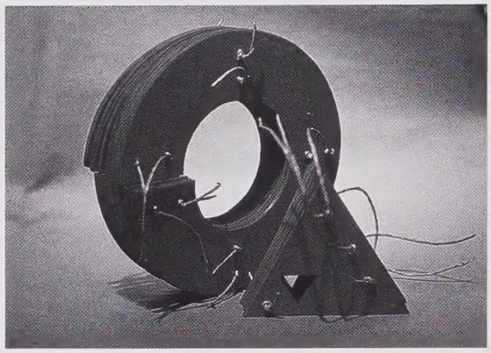


Susan Holt is an artist and metalsmith who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

clockwise from left
"Myra Mimlitsch-Gray: Conflation" (installation view), 2003
Photo: Myra Mimlitsch-Gray

Candelabrum: Seven Fragments, 2002
sterling silver
8 x 24 x 24" (dimensions variable)
Photo: Robert Storm

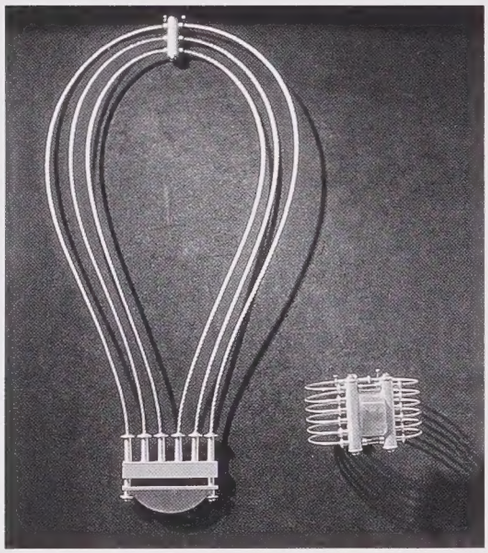
Chafing Dish, 2002
copper, found object
9 x 44 x 33"
Photo: Robert Storm



"CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN JEWELRY"

OXOXO GALLERY, BALTIMORE
FEBRUARY 8-MARCH 12, 2003

by J. SUSAN ISAACS



This spring, the city of Baltimore celebrated the 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg with a citywide cultural festival. Museums, theaters, and galleries throughout the city mounted exhibitions, concerts, and theatrical productions that concentrated on Russian art and artists. OXOXO's contribution to this exciting artistic mélange was an exhibition that focused on the contemporary jewelry of Russia. In collaboration with the Fabergé Arts Foundation and its director, Lyudmila Bakayutova, they were able to bring the work of 20 young Russian jewelers to Baltimore. The exhibition also included other work by artists from Moscow and by those who are Russian or of Russian extraction living in the United States. While the show did not have a specific visual theme or curatorial premise, it did highlight the work of a number of interesting artists representing varying degrees of professionalism, from those beginning careers in the arts to those with a mature style and highly developed degree of craftsmanship.

Some of the work revealed a distinctly Russian Avant-Garde sensibility or was clearly connected to the Fabergé tradition of elegant enamels, but other pieces fit within the wide parameters of a global contemporary aesthetic. A number of the most interesting objects came from a husband and wife team, Natalia Petrova and Alexey Petrov of Moscow, whose angular and geometric paper constructions in red and black distinctly recall early-twentieth-century Constructivism and Suprematism. They create wearable sculptures with paper, wood, twine, and glass using triangles, half-circles, and squares. Photographs of their friends and family wearing the pieces illustrate the ways in which these works operate in tandem with the human body, resulting in three-dimensional living sculptures.

Artist Evgenyi Charikov, a member of the Fabergé young artists group, contributed two metal works with a wonderful Art Deco aesthetic. They celebrate a machine sensibility with a love of industrial forms and materials. The artist uses non-precious materials like steel cable and aluminum, punctuated with amber, a staple of traditional Russian jewelry, to create hard-edged, seemingly machine-made objects of adornment. Of course, they were not constructed by machine, but crafted by hand, although their titles, *Electron Necklace* and *Electron Bracelet*, suggest industrial origins and a connection to Heroic Modernism, when science and industry were touted as the future promise of the world.

Lisa Vershbow shares Charikov's modernist sensibility. She contributed a bracelet and a brooch to the show. The wife of the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Alexander Vershbow, she maintains a studio in Moscow. Her work here is part of a series called "Novy Arbat," created with brightly colored plastic, silver, and aluminum. The forms were inspired by the modern industrial aspects of Moscow and a series of photographs of that city taken by the artist and her son, a professional photographer.

Quite different from these artists' wholly Modernist approaches is the work of Natalia Vereschako and Dmitryi Zaharenkov. Their wonderful, whimsical necklace, *Picnic*, is designed as a still-life of food and plants to be worn around the neck. It is an elegant creation in the Fabergé tradition of superlative enamel work and constructed in silver and gold cut-work. There is a dynamic contrast between the matte silver areas and the shiny enamel. Although this necklace's humor and stylistic approach are clearly of our time, its materials and craftsmanship suggest what we would most expect from an organization titled the "Fabergé Arts Foundation."

Other work in the show also brings to mind a Russian sensibility. Anna Raigorodskaya's sterling silver and gold rings present tiny narratives, almost sets in theatre productions. Their delicate craftsmanship connects to the Fabergé tradition, while their attention to narrative recalls the realist tradition that runs through Russian art, and their fairytale quality establishes a connection to Russian art and literature.

Finally, an artist whose works bridge East and West is Tatyana Zhurkov. Originally from Russia, she has lived in the U.S. for more than a decade. Zhurkov takes found objects, all created out of plastic, and strings them together like beads into sculptural necklaces. The colors are bright and the subjects are often humorous, as in *Garden of Eden*, which recalls such contemporary cartoon characters as *Teletubbies*. These works make reference to the bright colors and elegance of form of the Fabergé enamels, as mediated by Western television. They are a wonderful tribute to the global economy and a final exclamation point on a wide-ranging exhibition.

J. Susan Isaacs is associate professor of art history at Towson University, Maryland, and adjunct curator at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts.

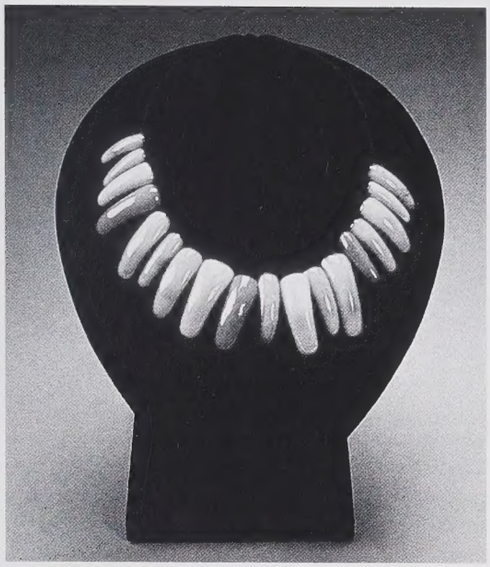
clockwise from lower left
Tatyana Zhurkov
Garden of Eden, 2002
plastic, glass
length 27"

Natalia Vereschako and Dmitryi Zaharenkov
Picnic, 2002
silver, 14k gold, enamel, citrine, garnet
diam. 18"

Evgenyi Charikov
Electron Necklace and Bracelet, 2002
amber, steel, aluminum
bracelet 7 3/4 x 1 3/4"; necklace 32 1/2 x 2"

Natalia Petrova and Alexey Petrov
Bracelet and Ring, 2002
paper, twine
bracelet diam. 6 1/2"; ring diam. 2'

All Photos: Aleksey Zolotartov



"SUSAN KINGSLEY: (NECESSITOUS) ACCESSORIES AND OTHER WORKS"

MONTEREY PENINSULA COLLEGE ART GALLERY, MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA
FEBRUARY 3-MARCH 3, 2003

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

Most older women, and anyone who's had to clear out mom's or grandma's clothes closet, will remember the painfully constricting hip-length boned corset, in white or pastel sateen, once considered *de rigeur* for high school proms. Susan Kingsley held onto hers, bronzed it, and displayed it as part of her recent exhibition. Here it kept company with several other "necessitous" items, roughly divided into "memories" and "masquerade" accessories. They included 22-pound platform shoes, a Maidenform bra, a baby doll undergarment, and a variety of toiletries, all (except the leaden shoes) glittering in electroformed copper.

The most obvious question is, why? Says Kingsley, an unabashed and well known feminist, "I like to make things that tell us something, that gently challenge us. I am also interested in paradox and irony, especially to do with the body, particularly the layered meanings that tell us about our culture." She took considerable pains to ensure her audience got her message, adding well-chosen, mostly literary, captions and using a mock museum-style to display the objects like an ethnographic collection.

Her starting point was Simone de Beauvoir's observation that "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one." Kingsley could, of course, have opened a tasteful old clothes shop and left it at that. But by recreating or electroforming these and other objects she added new dimensions to them, forcing us to reevaluate the status and nature of women in this country, and the cultural and economic pressures shaping our lives and bodies.

The metallic sparkle of the electroformed copper was both beautiful and deadening, a reminder of our collective and unimaginative buy-in to society's ideals of attractiveness and status. Many of the smaller objects, like makeup, a manicure set, a diaphragm and coil looked suspiciously like tools in someone's workshop, which is precisely what they were—tools for creating, recreating, and altering women.

Also visible was the underlying cruelty of some of these accessories to beauty. Reputedly, the first prototype bra was designed by an engineer who specialized in building cantilevered bridges. Even before that fatal day, some underwear and almost all corsets *hurt*, as do most excessively high heeled and platform shoes, as they uplift, compress, or tilt selected body parts. Kingsley also re-created an (unauthorized) museum copy of a spiked steel collar designed to train nineteenth-century dancing girls in India, based on a photograph in Oppi Untracht's classic *Jewelry Concepts and Technology*.

Kingsley had a good deal of sly fun with fetishes in our society, including teeth, hair, nails, and jewelry. Health foods also took a hit with her *Herbal/Barbie*, a copper and enameled doll-figure, sprouting mandrake roots and a garden headdress of beautifully fabricated leaves and flowers. "Barbie" stood in a glass case labeled, not with wear instructions, but with popular dietary supplements, from ephedra to zinc.

Jewelers would particularly enjoy her Tiffany spoof, particularly those of us who don't regard this firm's jewelry as the ultimate societal reward for womanly success. For her "Epiffany Collection," Kingsley fabricated and engraved silver gift boxes, and recreated the silhouettes of some Tiffany jewelry in flat silver, enameled in that firm's house color. The boxes were more interesting than the contents. Stripped of their glitz and sizzle, the pieces were revealed in their true blue colors: boring.

While many of the items in the show were vintage 1940-60s, the cool veneer of history shouldn't blind us to contemporary mores. Corsets and baby doll frillies are back in fashion (this time worn as outer garments), as are platform shoes and stiletto heels. How many of us have Nikes, spandex sports clothes, lipstick, or a big, fat engagement diamond?

So why do we do all this? One of Kingsley's favorite villains is advertising, which promotes and reinforces our notions of "necessitous" glamour. Her electroformed examples included a jar of Pond's face cream, with its ad "She's lovely, she's engaged, she uses Pond's"; a bra with its ad "I dreamed I was (fill in the blank here) in my Maidenform bra;" and sickening little bronzed baby shoes, now promoting "The John Adams Ashtray."

It goes without saying that all the pieces in this show were impeccably crafted. Kingsley, who already wrote the book on die-forming, could certainly write a sequel on electroforming, a technique she's been perfecting for more than 20 years. While few people might want to hang an electroformed corset on their living room wall, a handful of the other exhibits were elegant and artful enough to grace anyone's collection. My personal favorites were three pieces made in 1998: a *Nail Fetish* necklace in copper and enamel, a *Tooth Fetish* necklace in gold-washed sterling, and a black resin hand with long anticlastic brass nails, like a Chinese mandarin redesigned by Salvador Dali.

The Kingsley Collection is a valuable addition to feminist metalwork, already jump-started in California by Harriete Estel Berman, Angela Gleason, and others. It's too bad that at the moment there are no plans to move it to other venues, though it certainly belongs in a modern art museum, or even London's Victoria & Albert. Meanwhile, we can only hope the artist is working on a sequel. What would Kingsley do with botox injections, hair implants, boxer shorts, or Victoria's Secret? We're all in this charade together!

Jennifer Cross Gans is a writer and studio jeweler in San Francisco.

clockwise from top left
Nail Fetish Necklace, 1998
copper, enamel, mixed media
9 x 7 x 7"

Bronzed: I Dreamed I Was..., 2002
copper electroformed bra
12 x 10 x 8 1/2"

The Epiffany Collection, 2002
silver, enamel, mixed media
life-size jewelry and boxes

All Photos: Robert Neimy

"MELISSA LOVINGOOD: METALWORK"

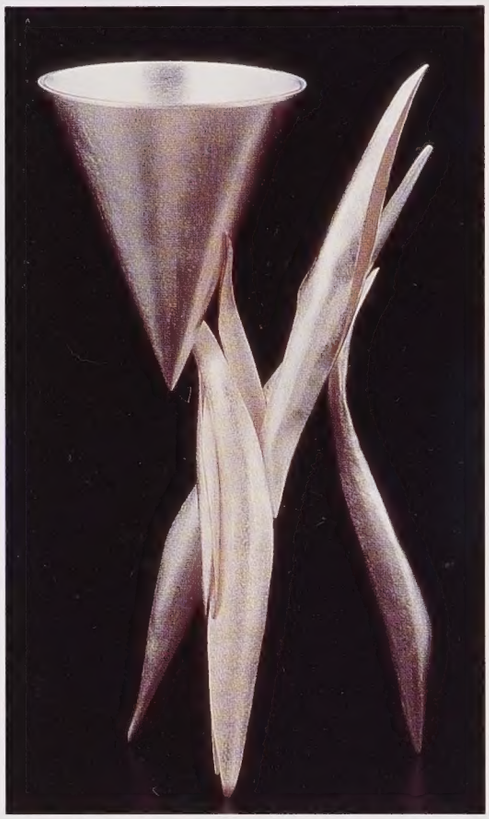
UNIVERSITY GALLERY, PITTSBURG STATE UNIVERSITY, KANSAS
JANUARY 15-FEBRUARY 12, 2003

by LYNN COOL

Melissa Lovingood's holloware illustrates her fresh directive, taking a fascination with sea life forms to a new level. This exhibition reads like a travelogue, documenting the artist's ongoing concern with various floral and fauna of the marine environment. Lovingood's depiction of these forms in incredible documentary detail has evolved over time. The earliest works in this exhibition were created between 1997 and 2000; they are hollow formed abstractions of her sea life subjects. Works created in this past year are wall pieces, and reveal a newly obsessive, yet undeniably admirable, interest in her inspirational flotsam and jetsam. Traditional chasing and repoussé techniques and painterly use of color do more than embellish these functional forms—they seem to become the focus upon which Lovingood builds her three-dimensional work.

In the exhibit's earliest work, *Chalice Cup*, a striking play of geometric and organic form adds energizing movement, while delivering a pleasing balance of mass, line, and asymmetry. The delicate tips of diagonally filed pods open in undulating rhythm and embrace a sharp edged cone. Details such as vent holes in the form of a cross, placed low on two of three pods, and the chalice's pure white fine silver finish, inform the work of its religious function. The off-center placement of the cup suggests the special care needed to avoid spilling the liquid, and adds a metaphorical reference to the immense focus and blind faith of a fervent worshipper partaking of ceremonial ritual.

Lovingood presents two distinct groups of serving pieces. The first is comprised of elegant sterling utensils, all fabricated with exquisite care. In *Butter Knife*, the pod shape becomes a completely volumetric handle dotted with small nodules of 14K gold, and terminates with a curved blade, recalling a medieval scythe, stylishly graceful with an ominous edge. The handle of *Letter Opener* is set with a biomorphic pearl, and the blade's flame-like shape flows with sinuous grace. The other group of spoons, candleholders, bud vases, and menorahs all rely



on invigorating, colorful anticlastic forms to deliver imagery of small fish gliding over blades of sea grass as a thematic connection. Three serving spoons, titled *Ocean Creatures*, feature calligraphic handles and cross pieces that dart across serrated and oxidized silver bowls. Lovingood's straightforward treatment here brings to mind an archaic, anthropological quality, leading one to imagine undiscovered works created by ancient people in reverence to the creatures that nourished them. A more active piece, *Menorah #2*, combines her previous spicular forms at various angles. The delicate candle cups squiggle along two layers of cross pieces, balanced on splayed legs. Textural variation, such as ridges and dimples hammered into the metal, help evoke plant and marine life imagery. Through repetition, the multiple pods add flashes of movement, like shots of color created by a most assured expressionistic painter. She seems to have avoided being a "careful arranger," instead entangling the forms and mimicking the organized chaos that is inherent in nature.

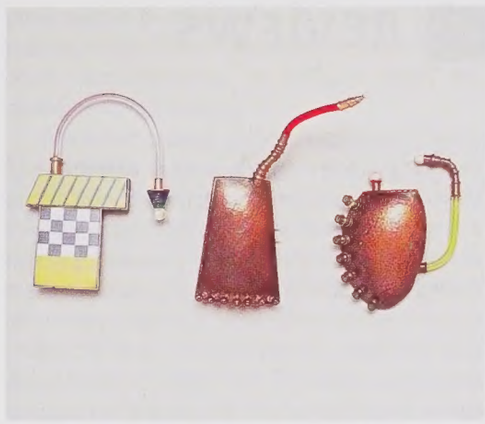
Finally, Lovingood presents her newest and perhaps most challenging work, wall-mounted candleholders and menorahs. Unlike previous pieces, in which colorized copper components form expressionistic movement, these chased and repoussé renderings are low relief sculptures. They are incorporated into curious box constructed vessels that serve as platforms for the artist's focus: her close-up view of the marine environment. Although Lovingood cautiously adds that she has taken artistic license, one is aware of her extreme care in their depiction. In *Sea Cucumber Candleholder*, multi-leveled, tubular amoebic forms with fingerlike projectiles in reds and violets swell out from its tightly composed platform. An uncommon, mysterious subject, this work suggests a bizarre mix of biological rendering and anatomical model. In *Medusa/Jellyfish*, the dark, ominous background has been enlivened by childlike, slightly jarring color, adding a sense of surreal drama to the three-dimensional, clawed, and tentacled specimen. The candleholder's outer teardrop shape follows the composition within, and by enclosing the sea creature, lends additional tension to its menacing subject. In *Menorah #3: Anglerfish*, brilliant color enriches stunning repoussé detail, leading the viewer to yearn for a tactile experience. The placement of eerie, deep-sea creatures on the candle-laden menorah suggests commentary on religious enlightenment, the proverbial good over evil, much like a Bosch painting that depicts Heaven and Hell. These new works follow an exploratory avenue that is intriguing, eccentric, and leaves one wondering where this instigation is headed—towards further development, or yet another layer of calcification of Lovingood's body of work.

Lynn Cool is a metalsmith and writer who lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

clockwise from lower left
Chalice Cup, 1997
sterling silver
10 x 5 1/4 x 3 3/4"

Menorah #3: Anglerfish, 2002
copper, patina
8 1/2 x 11 x 3"

Menorah #2, 2000
copper, patina
10 x 14 x 8"



"THE JEWELRY OF ROBERT EBENDORF: A RETROSPECTIVE OF FORTY YEARS"

GALLERY OF ART AND DESIGN, NCSU,
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
JANUARY 16-MARCH 9, 2003

ARKANSAS ART CENTER, LITTLE ROCK
MAY 18-JUNE 22, 2003

RENWICK GALLERY OF THE SMITHSONIAN
AMERICAN ART MUSEUM,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SEPTEMBER 12, 2003-JANUARY 19, 2004

RACINE ART MUSEUM, RACINE, WISCONSIN
FEBRUARY 15-MAY 4, 2004

by KATE DOBBS ARIAIL

A manifesto condemning retrospective exhibitions for living artists crossed my desk recently. The writer felt these shows unfairly lionized those lucky individuals while they might benefit from increased fame or fortune—although Time might after all prove them unworthy of the honor. Certainly, there is a point to this, when one considers the many shallow "retrospectives" focusing on flash-in-the-pan artists having their 15 minutes. But when an artist has worked consistently and well year after year, why should we be denied an awareness of the great trajectory of his path until it is too late for it to inform our understanding of his current work? "The Jewelry of Robert Ebendorf," selected from the prodigious output of four decades of passionate creation by one of America's most inventive craftsmen, presents a cogent argument in favor of the long look back at the work of still-living artists.

Curated by Ruth Summers and Bruce Pepich and organized by the Gallery of Art and Design at North Carolina State University, the exhibition follows Ebendorf from his post-graduate days in the early 1960s up through 2002. The work, therefore, ranges through an astonishing diversity of techniques, forms, materials and styles, yet in attitude and aesthetic remains oddly consistent. In addition to jewelry for body ornamentation, the exhibition includes highly decorative functional objects, chairs, non-wearable miniature sculpture, drawings, and collages, as well as sketchbook facsimiles.

From the beginning, Ebendorf's work has had an unusual kinetic quality. Even the early objects—tightly circumscribed symmetrical shapes—dance with an interior energy. The raised silver forms of berry spoon, gavel, umbrella handle, and such are rendered talismanic by the activity of their pierced or applied ornamentation. In this early work we also begin to sense Ebendorf's extreme sensitivity to the emotive and expressive powers of materials, especially as they interact with one another. Sterling silver with ebony says something quite different from silver with walnut.

By the early 1970s, Ebendorf's palette of materials had expanded far beyond that of traditional metalsmithing, and his form-making had become equally quirky, as demonstrated by a particularly charming group of pins—the "Colored Smoke Machine" brooches. These mix gold, silver, copper, glass, Plexiglas, plastic tubing, and pearls in funny little appendaged forms, some of them reminiscent of Philip Guston's strange organ-like painted images from the same period. Catalogue essayist Marjorie Simon calls them sexy and emphasizes their phallic components, but it might be more accurate to say they are emblems of a grand curiosity. Their lust seems more for the richness of lived experience, rather than strictly sexual.

Many other wonderful brooches and rings follow these, and we see Ebendorf becoming increasingly sophisticated in the way he puts together shapes and materials. Any given piece may be more about contrast, or about harmony or about precarious balance—but they are all about relationships. The precision with which Ebendorf relates his components, together with the extraordinary beauty of his technique, takes these objects into a realm of meaning where one does not often find jewelry.

The issue of relationships is pursued in the ColorCore necklaces and bracelets of the 1980s. He carefully shapes chips of this Formica product and strings them together with sterling silver and rubber, but the ColorCore is unattractive, and the mix inspires no feeling but boredom. These pieces look like evidence of a mid-career stall, a holding pattern, when the artist had to make something just because that is what he does—but he didn't really know what to make. There is, however, an untitled "drawing" of paint and pebbles from this period that is one of the loveliest objects in the show, and expresses with perfect clarity the way Ebendorf instinctively creates a mosaic wholeness from collected fragments.

Fortunately, the ideas and the zest soon returned, better and bolder. There are chunky necklaces of globe-like handmade beads that look like Ebendorf just grabbed up the planets to loop around a woman's neck. There are necklaces as gaudy and large as leis, made from brightly colored SoCal beach trash; and one equally large but demurely composed of slender sticks, trimmed with delicate gold wire spirals and tiny pearls. Another series of necklaces with cross-shaped pendants shows Ebendorf in full scavenger mode. Precious metals, coat hanger wire, old metal cans, beach glass, shells, jewels, all are equally admired and used in thrilling juxtaposition.

The exhibition concludes with pieces from Ebendorf's most recent body of work, in which his scavenging practices reach their logical conclusion with the use of parts from formerly living creatures. Catalogue author Simon regards this work as problematic, an unmodulated expression of the artist's private pain (about which we are told perhaps too much), and she gives these severed body parts an unnecessarily literal interpretation.

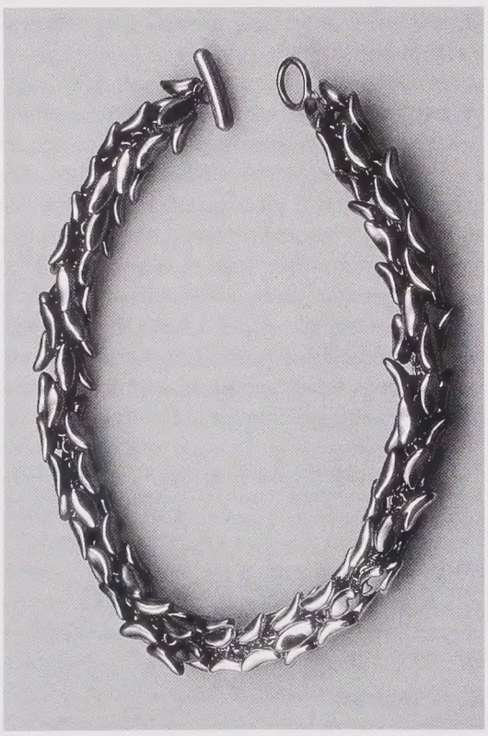
Neither pretty nor whimsical, these pieces instead emanate an austere and melancholy beauty. The most powerful is *Jaw Necklace*, a toothed jawbone weathered to earth brown and studded with a galaxy of seed pearls, surmounted by the dense whorl of a silver spiral and hung from heavy links of silver chain. This piece is an extraordinary orchestration of texture and tone, mass and rhythm, material and craft. More importantly, it is a poignant statement on our gorgeous mortality from an artist who shares his wisdom through the work of his hands.

Kate Dobbs Ariail is a cultural critic in Durham, North Carolina, whose writings on art, craft, theatre, and dance have appeared in many regional and national publications.

left to right
Necklace: Off the Street, From the Beach, ca. 1993
base metal, plastic objects
length 28"
Photo: Doug Van de Zande

Jaw Necklace, 2001
bone, pearl, sterling silver
pendant: 7 x 2 1/4"

Colored Smoke Machines (brooches), 1974-1975
l to r: sterling silver, Plexiglas, 18k gold plate, pearl; 3 3/4 x 3 1/4"
copper pearls, plastic tubing, glass; 5 x 2 1/2"
copper pearls, plastic tubing, glass; 4 x 3 1/4"



"VAN MCKENZIE: ELEMENTS"

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE, TORONTO
JANUARY 25-MARCH 2, 2003

by NIKI KAVAKONIS

Titled "Elements," in reference to the repetitive use of a single form derived, elementally, from nature, Van McKenzie's recent exhibition at the Craft Studio at Harbourfront Centre could just as easily have been named for one of the artist's own recurring themes: the "simplicity of the complex."

In recent years, the Craft Studio at Harbourfront Centre has been celebrating the work of some of its most successful alumni. Through the winter months of this year, visitors were brightened by the display of McKenzie's current work, curated by Melanie Egan. Eight cases housed not an assortment of pieces, but, merely a single "element": a single necklace or bracelet. Initially, such a concept might seem stark, to place a solitary small-scale work in such a large space, but their presence, laid out totemically or curved in undulating rhythms, begs the viewer to consider every "element" of their composition. They become monolithic upon consideration.

The sun has a greater significance to McKenzie than to most. He is affected by SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder, an ailment that, during the winter months, is treated by exposure to a full spectrum lamp. Early works investigated his own relationship to the sun, and it was while working on "Starburst," a set comprising a necklace, bracelet, and earrings, that he began accumulating multitudes of tiny fabricated parts into a single piece. This led to McKenzie's continuing interest in multiples; in the repetition of a single form, and his pursuit of more forms from nature to integrate into his work. In an attempt to simplify his process, he went from fabricating bits to casting the same unit over and over again.

In the current work displayed at Harbourfront, this repetition of form is fully developed. In the necklace *Pebble*, seven solid gold pebbles are intermittently nestled amongst their solid black counterparts. Only their variety of position and angle belie their uniformity—each piece is actually an exact duplicate of the previous, regardless of material. The deep black pieces contrast sharply with the gold ones, highlighting their opulence. Yet it is the black units that are the most striking—the depth of their luster seems to be of some foreign exotic metal, perhaps carved from deep inside the earth's crust.

Created through oxidization, the blackened particles are a less familiar manifestation of silver. Here is another example of the "simplicity in the complex." Silver, popularly considered less valuable than gold, has been raised in value by the labor-intensive process of oxidization. The silver pieces' deep black resonance is the result of painstaking repetitions of polishing and oxidizing.

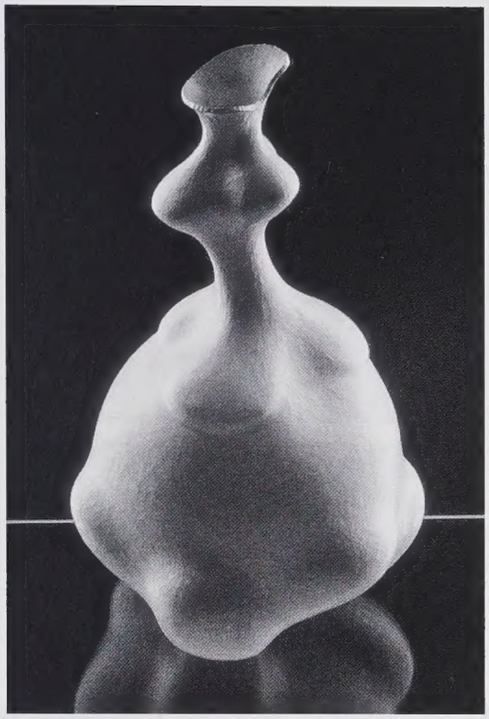
In the necklace *Black Bean*, the theme has become increasingly luxurious, increased many-fold by the sheer number and weight of the units. It is weight that gently reminds the wearer that this is not an insignificant neckpiece. In *Twig*, a bracelet comprised of hundreds of similar coral-shaped twig forms, McKenzie displays his virtuosity at the oxidizing process. Here, every single twig shape has been oxidized, not to a deep black, but to a uniform charcoal gray, which gleams and glints in the light.

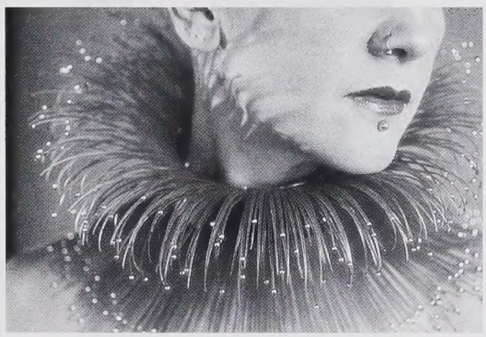
Niki Kavakonis is a practicing jeweler and designer, and current president of the Metal Arts Guild of Canada.

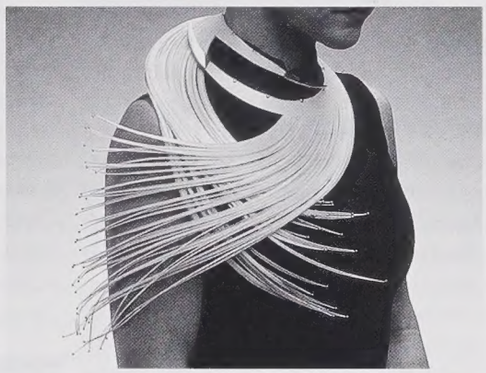
clockwise from lower left
Black Bean (necklace), 2002
oxidized sterling silver, 18k gold
length 15 3/4"

Twig (bracelet), 2003
oxidized sterling silver, 18k gold
diam. 9"

Pebble (necklace), 2003
oxidized sterling silver, 18k gold
length 17 3/4"
All Photos: John Dowding



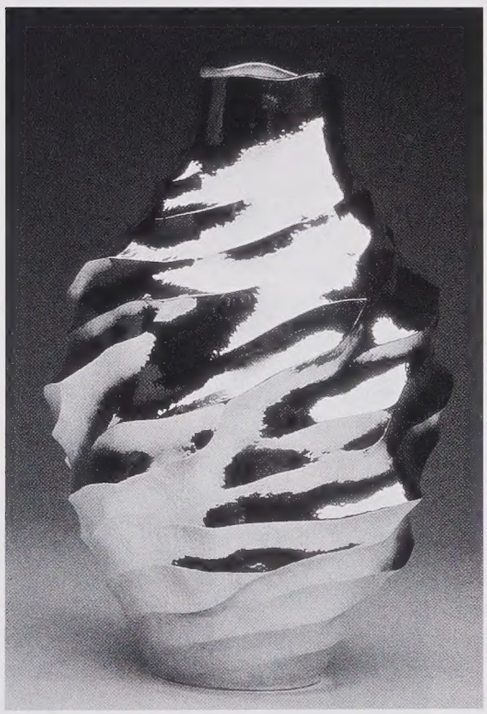




"STASIS IN MOTION: HIROSHI SUZUKI AND ANOUSH WADDINGTON"

LESLEY CRAZE GALLERY, LONDON
MARCH 7 – 29, 2003

by DEIRDRE O'DAY



A shared response to nature and an absorbing interest in the interrelating dynamics of light and movement are given widely differing expressions in the work of Japanese silversmith Hiroshi Suziki and that of Brazilian jeweler Anoush Waddington, two adventurous, individual spirits who showed together in London earlier this year.

Originally a sculptor, and the son and grandson of ceramists, Suzuki aims to invest silver with the pliability of clay. He uses soft fine silver (999 per 1000) to achieve this goal, and reserves the stronger alloyed silver (958) for purely functional objects. To raise and shape his pieces, Suzuki has developed his own hammering technique, parting company with tradition by using the minimum of stakes, often forming his pieces without that restraint or "in the air"—in his words. Most importantly, he feels this technique allows him to manipulate the silver as he hammers it, as if—like a sculptor or ceramist—he were using his fingertips to push and pull the material into shape. This is vividly demonstrated in his anthropomorphic *Figure fl*, in form not unlike the Paleolithic Venus figurines of 20,000-30,000 years ago. The gray matte surfaces of such forms provide both a formal and a color contrast with such highly polished vessels as *Aqua Poesy VII*, which seems to shimmer with reflected sunlight. The piece's deep, sharp-edged diagonal grooves ripple rhythmically across the body, their high relief creating dramatic light and shadow and evoking the effects of light on moving water. Water is a constant theme in his imagery, which his aqueous titles confirm.

Underlying Suzuki's work is a confluence of oriental and occidental cultural influences. He is instinctively connected with the Japanese ceramic tradition and his partiality for working in matte silver derives from the Japanese taste. Within houses that tend to be light-filled, as is common in both Japan and the United States, polished, highly reflective surfaces throw out so much light that line and form can lose definition, whereas, Suzuki observes, a surface left unpolished will remain clearly defined. His matte silver version of *Aqua Poesy VII*, when compared with the polished version, perhaps illustrates this belief. He also focuses attention on the insides of vessels, neglected and interesting areas, by sometimes inserting an inner sleeve of metal to perform the dual function of masking what can be the unattractive underside of a heavily hammered surface and creating an additional one for decoration. A successful example of this innovation is the bowl *Dual Rivulet 6*, whose inner sleeve is encircled with a broad flowing pattern and its outer surface evenly covered with small hammer marks, an intricate relief, like deeply textured chasing.

Always in search of new expressive forms, Suzuki works quickly, instinctively, and without preparatory drawings, preferring to work directly from his imagination. In a rare departure from this practice, however, he accepted a commission to make a standing cup based on a Baroque beaker as it was depicted in a seventeenth-century Dutch painting. This led him to create the cup *Aqua Poesy VIII* that, with its regular hammered troughs swirling around the waisted form, brings to mind earlier medieval standing cups. Suzuki is now looking to increasingly explore traditional forms in European metalwork for inspiration.

Anoush Waddington's background ranges from performing arts, to animation, to metalwork and jewelry, accessories and millinery. This show features her "Sun" and "Moon" collections, in which she cleverly exploits the decorative potential of the versatile plastic polypropylene with an elegant wit, a little whimsy, and theatrical style. She manipulates the tensile, vibrantly colored material, gathering it in strings and strips to form chokers and bracelets, earrings and brooches in red and orange, silvery gray and black, which spring upwards and outwards from the body and interact with the wearer.

The loveliest pieces are her flattering neckpieces and chokers constructed of springy "wires" of polypropylene tipped with metal and crystal beads to form a collar or large frill which, like the starched ruffs of the sixteenth century, encourages the head into an erect position. The natural iridescence of the plastic adds to the allure of these pieces, which exude the glamour of stage and catwalk. But the *pièce de resistance* of this collection must be the *Star* neckpiece, whose lustrous white "wings" can be adapted in a variety of ways: folding together like a swan's wings, swathing a shoulder, or curling out to form a feathery frame outlining the body.

Deirdre O'Day, a former curator of jewelry at the Victoria & Albert Museum, is a writer on jewelry and fine and decorative arts, and a BBC researcher.

clockwise from lower left
Hiroshi Suzuki
Aqua-Poesy VII, 2002
fine silver
8 1/4 x 7 1/4 x 7 1/4"
Photo: Hiroshi Suzuki

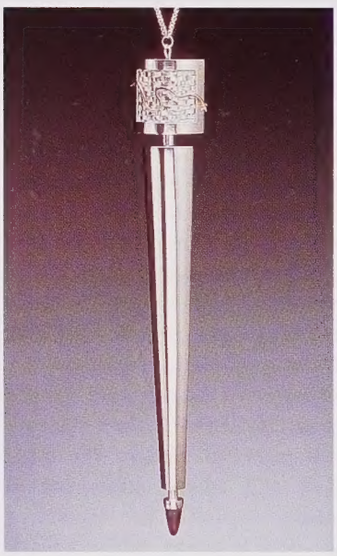
Hiroshi Suzuki
Figure fl (Venus-2), 2000
fine silver
9 7/8 x 6 1/8 x 6 1/8"
Photo: Hiroshi Suzuki

Anoush Waddington
Purple Rain Neckpiece, 2001
silver, beads, polypropylene
3 1/8 x 11 3/4 x 11 3/4"
Photo: Griff Bond

Anoush Waddington
Stars Neckpiece, 2003
silver, polypropylene, metal beads, stainless steel wire
11 3/4 x 11 3/4"
Photo: Griff Bond

COMMISSIONS

by Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman



clockwise from above
Munya Avigail Upin
Torah Breastplate and Yad, 2002
sterling silver, fine silver, 14k gold, quartz
Breastplate: 12 x 8 3/4 x 1/2"
Yad: 7 x 1 x 1"
Commissioned by Jeff and Jodi Upin for Bet Shalom Congregation
Photo: Dean Powell

Terri Gelenian-Wood
Fish Slice, 2002
sterling silver, Dupont Corian
18 x 4 x 2", 21.6 oz.
Commissioned by Benton Seymour Rabinovitch

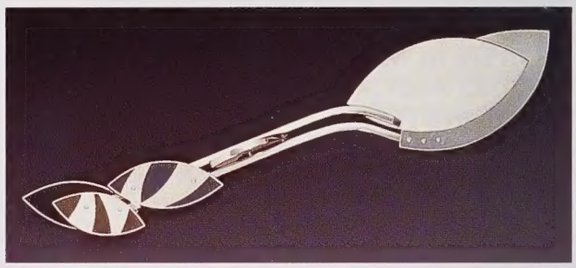
Matthew Hollern and Pamela Argentieri
Global Champion of Freedom Award, 2001
pewter, bronze, gold leaf
15 x 7 x 7", 6 lbs.
Commissioned by Students in Free Enterprise, John Carroll University
Photo: Matthew Hollern

Munya Avigail Upin *Torah Breastplate and Yad*, 2002

When Jeff and Jodi Upin commissioned a Torah breastplate and yad (pointer) for Bet Shalom Congregation, their gift honored a family tradition of worship dating to the 1920s. Jeff Upin's grandfather emigrated from Lithuania to Minnesota in 1921, settling in a rural community with few Jewish families and no local synagogue. He bought a Torah scroll and conducted religious services at home. Decades later, Jeff Upin inherited this Torah and donated it to Bet Shalom Congregation in the Twin Cities suburb of Minnetonka. To celebrate his son's bar mitzvah in 2002, Upin commissioned an ornamental breastplate and yad for the Torah from his cousin, Munya Avigail Upin. A metalsmith experienced in Jewish liturgical commissions, she sought to design companion pieces with traditional forms and contemporary style. Circling the sterling silver breastplate are 12 abstract shapes, a traditional allusion to the 12 tribes of Israel, woven in fine silver. Forged 14k gold wire adorns each woven section, connecting them visually and symbolizing common "threads" that bind people together. At the breastplate's center, upward-curving forms suggest flames but can be read as the Hebrew word *shalom*. "Hebrew letters can be manipulated so that the forms become a design in themselves," Upin explained. The top of the sterling yad (a pointer used to aid in reading the Torah scroll) repeats the breastplate's woven silver and forged gold wire elements. The yad tapers to a point of rutilated quartz whose crystal inclusions echo the color of the gold wire. Upin fabricated both the breastplate and the yad from sterling silver sheet. She wove the fine silver shapes, framed them with sterling, and cold-connected them with bolts to the body of each piece. The forged gold wire is soldered to the sterling frame of each woven section. Honored by the opportunity to create distinctive contemporary ornaments for the Torah her uncle read 80 years ago, Upin joined her extended family for the breastplate and yad dedication at Bet Shalom Congregation on November 14, 2002.

Matthew Hollern and Pamela Argentieri *Global Champion of Freedom Award*, 2001

Matthew Hollern and Pamela Argentieri had collaborated on Christian liturgical objects such as chalices and plates, but the commission they received in late 2001 offered a unique challenge: to design an award for personal presentation to Pope John Paul II. Leaders of the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) chapter at John Carroll University in suburban Cleveland initiated the idea for a Global Champion of Freedom Award, and decided the first award would be given to the pope for his international efforts supporting human rights. SIFE's student leaders contacted the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) in search of metalsmiths to design and fabricate the award. Matthew Hollern, dean of the Crafts Environment and associate professor of jewelry and metals, expressed interest in the project together with his wife, metalsmith and jeweler Pamela Argentieri. The students envisioned an award of substantial size with a budget of $3,000 and a two-month deadline. After discussing practical concerns of height and weight, Hollern and Argentieri prototyped possible designs. The award's final form, 15 inches high and weighing six pounds, consists of a pod or wing shape rising from a hollow spun pewter base. Three separate pewter wedges form the pod/wing, whose shape refers abstractly to nature as well as potential for growth and freedom. (The number three also alludes to the Christian Trinity.) Two of the wedges' interiors are lined with gold leaf, pairing what the artists call "humble" pewter with "rich" precious metal. Each fabricated pewter wedge is hollow; internal steel armatures provide structural support. A rectangular bronze history plate affixed to the base's bottom reads, "Presented by the John Carroll University SIFE Team To His Holiness Pope John Paul II, 2001." After two intense months of design and fabrication, Hollern and Argentieri carried the Global Champion of Freedom Award by hand from Cleveland to Vatican City, where the pope received it in a personal audience with the artists and John Carroll students on December 19, 2001.



Terri Gelenian-Wood *Fish Slice*, 2002

Terri Gelenian-Wood created her contemporary, geometric *Fish Slice* as a reflection of life on the shores of Lake Michigan, where she spent her childhood. The sterling silver server incorporates navettes (ovals pointed at both ends) in both the blade and handle. These shapes allude playfully to wind-filled sails and fish without tails, as well as individual fish scales. The server's flat blade, comprising two navettes sweat-soldered together, suggests a calm lake surface, while the four silver and Corian navettes perched on the handle's end impart a sense of movement through water. (The smallest navette, inserted vertically between the handle's twin bars, becomes "a little fish swimming above the horizon line," says Gelenian-Wood.) The artist chose to fill the silver bevels with Corian—in cool, watery shades of Turkish blue, gray, olive, and black—for its durability and ease of cutting with a wax blade. The metalsmith portrays the contrast between placid water and sandy shore through different textures; the blade's bottom navette is smooth, while the top one has a rough, knurled texture. In the handle, silver shapes riveted atop the sleek Corian-filled bevels have the same grainy feel. To make the double handle, Gelenian-Wood bent and formed two square stock 2-gauge silver bars, arranged them parallel with spacers, and riveted them together at both ends. The Corian-filled bevels were sweat-soldered and riveted into place. Gelenian-Wood received the commission from Benton Seymour Rabinovitch, noted collector of antique and contemporary broad-bladed servers, after introducing herself and her work to him in 2001. Rabinovitch accepted the fish slice upon completion in June 2002.

Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman is a freelance writer living in Michigan.

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San Francisco Conference a Huge Success

A record number of attendees, exceeding 800, enjoyed SNAG's conference, "Making It in Metal," hosted by Elizabeth Shypertt and Mike Holmes of Velvet da Vinci gallery in May. The conference was generously sponsored by 3M, Inc. Both 3M vice president Rosa Miller and marketing manager Colleen Foster attended the conference and gave a moving address at the final night banquet. The conference also received significant financial support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Frei & Borel, and the American Crafts Council, among many other sponsors.

The Academy of Art College (AAC) produced "Exhibition in Motion" as a school project. "Exhibition in Motion" was an exciting fashion show featuring four student models walking the runway with professional precision. The models wore innovative fashions, all designed and created by AAC students specifically for the 30 pieces of one-of-a-kind art jewelry modeled that evening. Conference attendees were also treated to 14 exhibitions in the Bay Area running concurrently with the conference. The next SNAG conference is in St. Petersburg, Florida, March 17-21, 2004, and will be hosted by the Florida Society of Goldsmiths and Florida Craftsmen.

Imogene "Tex" Gieling Receives SNAG Honorary Member Award

Imogene "Tex" Gieling received SNAG's Honorary Member Award for a lifetime of achievement in the metal arts field. Tex Gieling is a pioneer in the history of metal arts in the Bay Area. She founded the metals departments at both San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley. In a career spanning five decades, Gieling influenced an entire generation of teachers in the field. Her work has been exhibited widely throughout the U.S. and abroad, was part of the seminal exhibition, "Objects USA," in 1969, and is represented in numerous museum collections including the Renwick Gallery and the Oakland Museum. Most recently, Gieling permanently endowed the Imogene Gieling Curator of Crafts and Decorative Arts position at the Oakland Museum.

In a ceremony featuring a slide presentation of her life and work, Gieling received the award, made by Cynthia Eid—a stunning sterling silver vessel on a black marble base. Eid's was the winning design in SNAG's competition last year to create a new award that will be used for years to come.

SNAG Silent Auction Raises Record Amount

The SNAG silent auction raised a record $12,000 in San Francisco to help fund the SNAG Educational Endowment scholarships and SNAG's year-round educational programming, including the SOFA lecture series, minority outreach grants for high schools, workshop grants program, SNAG's web site, and publication of SNAG News. Auction coordinators Allyson Cooper and Kristin Mitsu Shiga secured enticing premiums from Bonny Doon, Allcraft, Boris Bally, Peggy Eng, Marcia Macdonald, Zach Peabody, and many others.

SNAG Welcomes Five New Members to Board of Directors

Five new members have joined the SNAG Board of Directors: Angela Gleason (studio jeweler, educator), Melissa Huff (studio jeweler, metalsmith), Keith Lewis (studio jeweler, educator), Barbara Minor (studio jeweler, enamellist), and Ellen Wieske (studio metalsmith, assistant director at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts). SNAG sincerely thanks outgoing board members Jan Baum, Allora Doolittle, and Tara Stephenson for all their hard work and dedication.

top to bottom

"Exhibition in Motion" at the San Francisco conference

Silent auction, San Francisco conference

Board member James Cohen with Honorary Member Award recipient Imogene Gieling holding the award

Vendor Room, San Francisco SNAG conference

All Photos: Richard Matzinger

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Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Cup with Oval, 1998
sterling silver
5 x 4 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
$4\ 3/4 \times 1\ 1/4 \times 1\ 1/2$"
Photo: Ron Boszko

(EIP 2002 *Metalsmith*)
cover: Lindsay K. Rais
Stacked Basket, 2001
Photo: D. James Dee

Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
Photo: Todd Flashner

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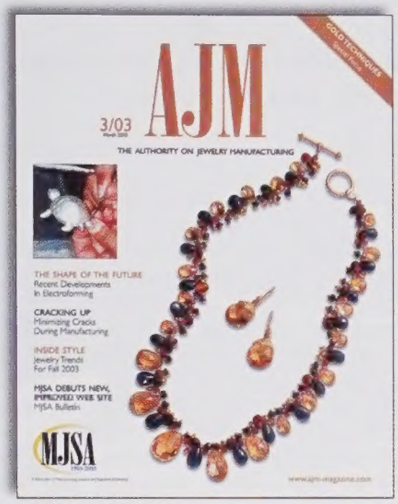

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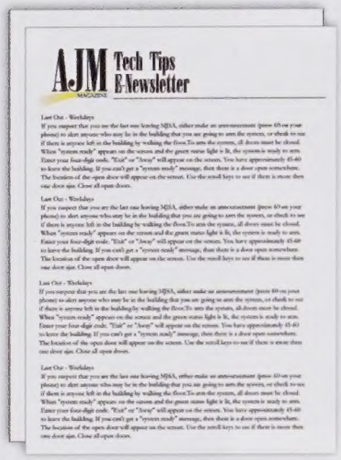

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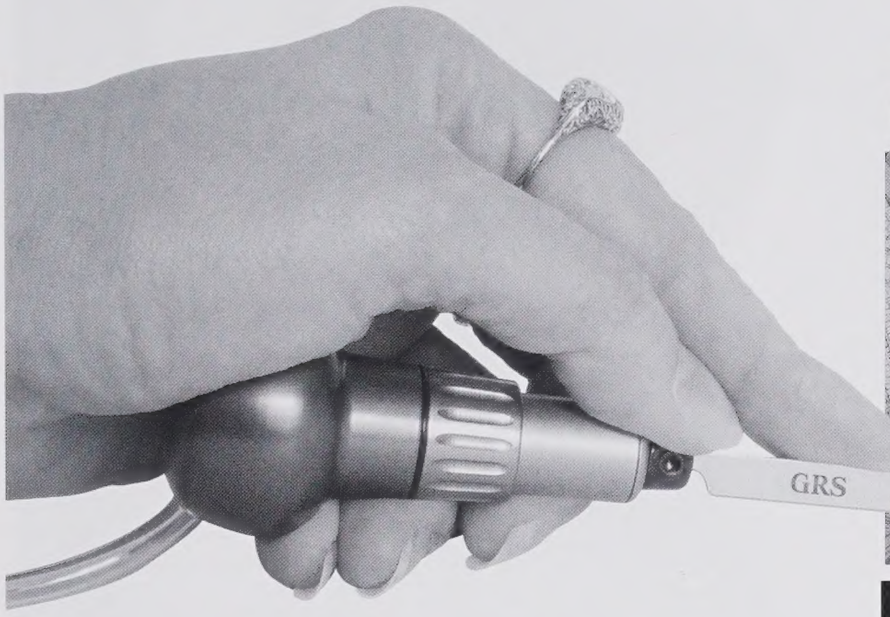

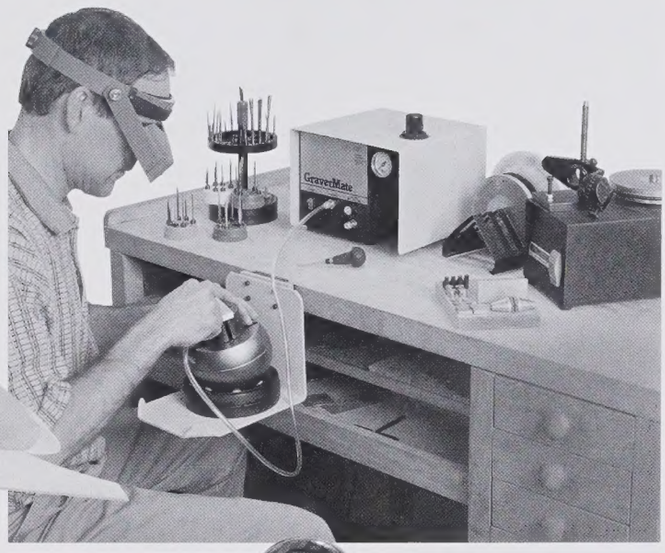

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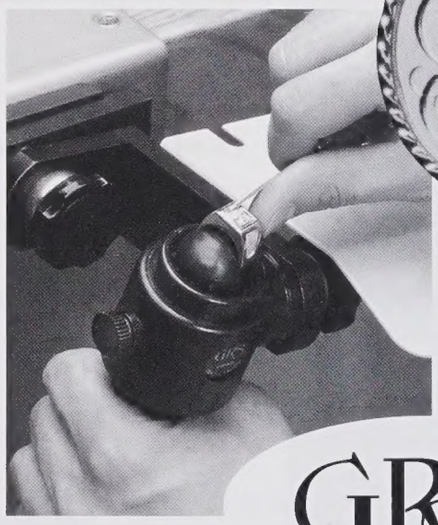

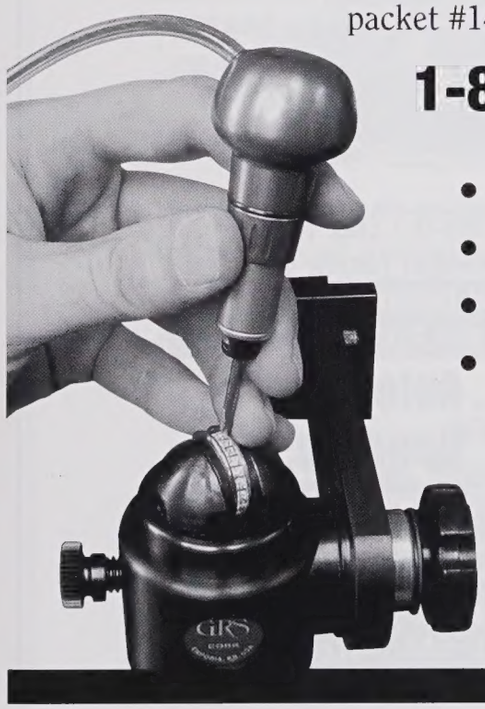

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Annie Aalto, Fairfield, Iowa, *Untitled*, sterling silver, enamel, photograph

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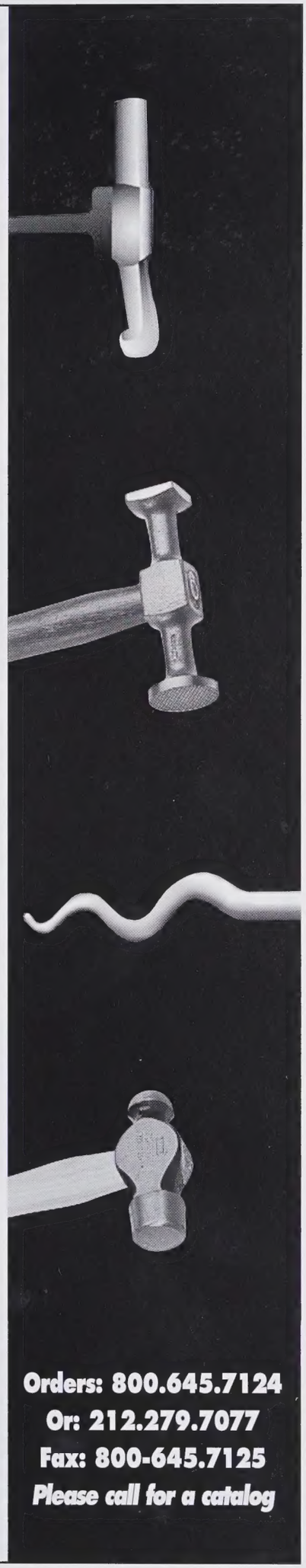

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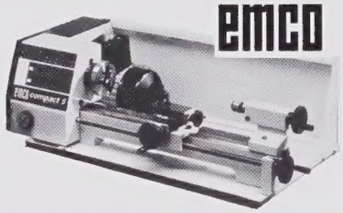

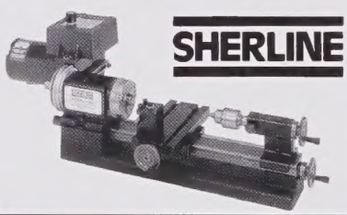

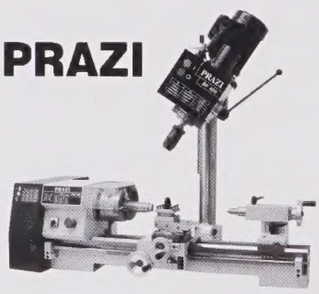

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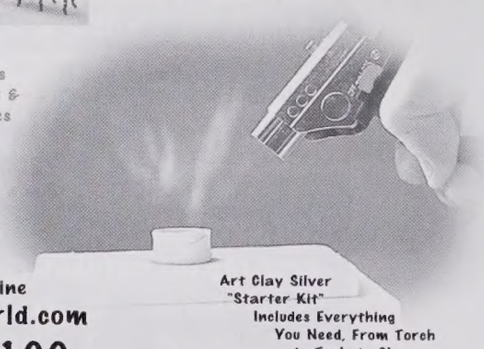

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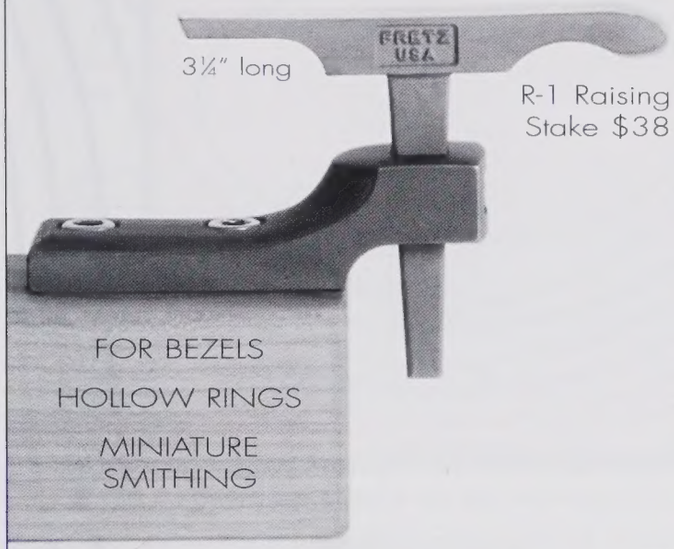

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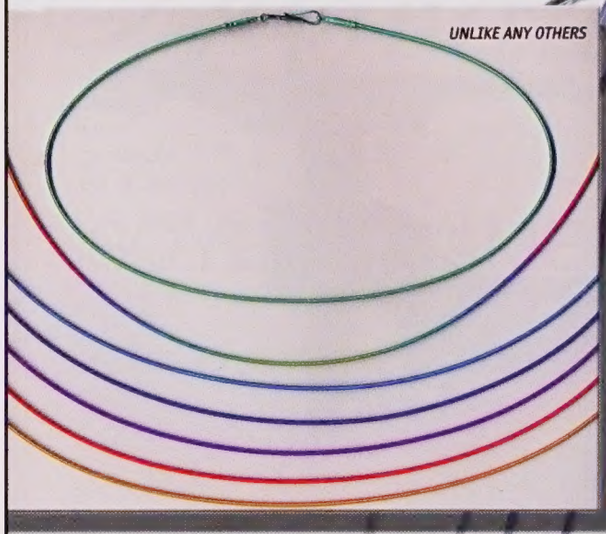

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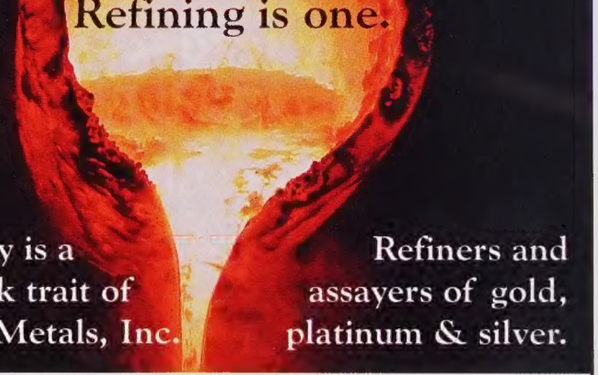

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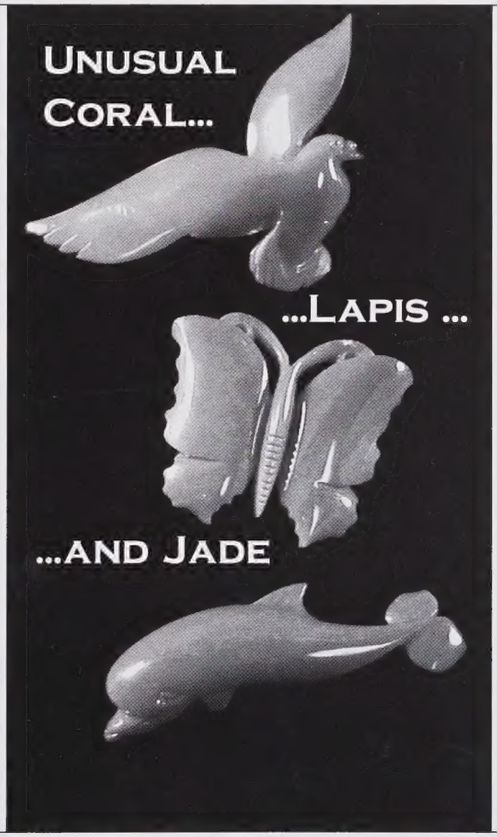

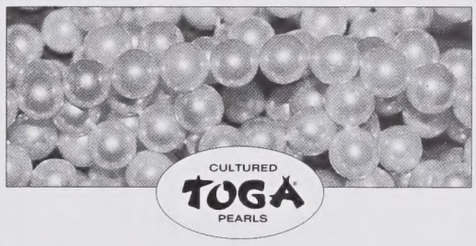

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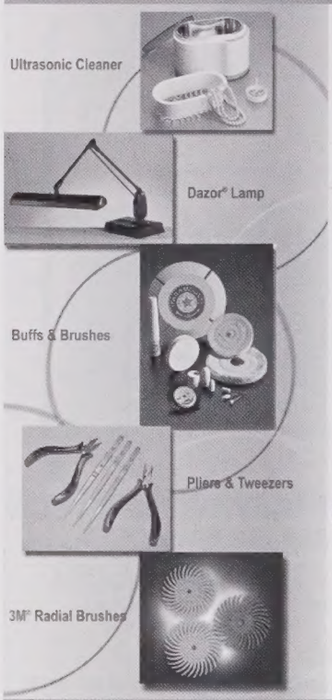

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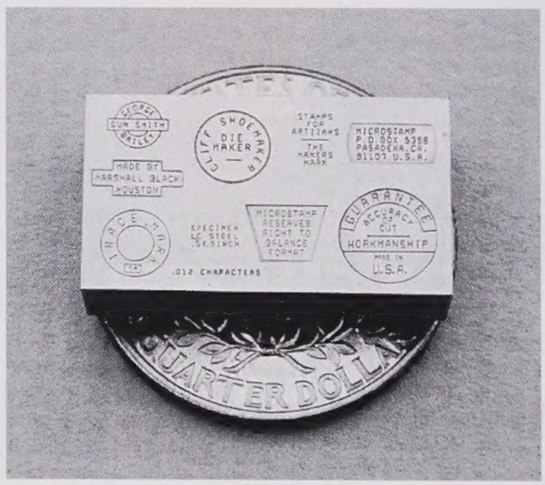

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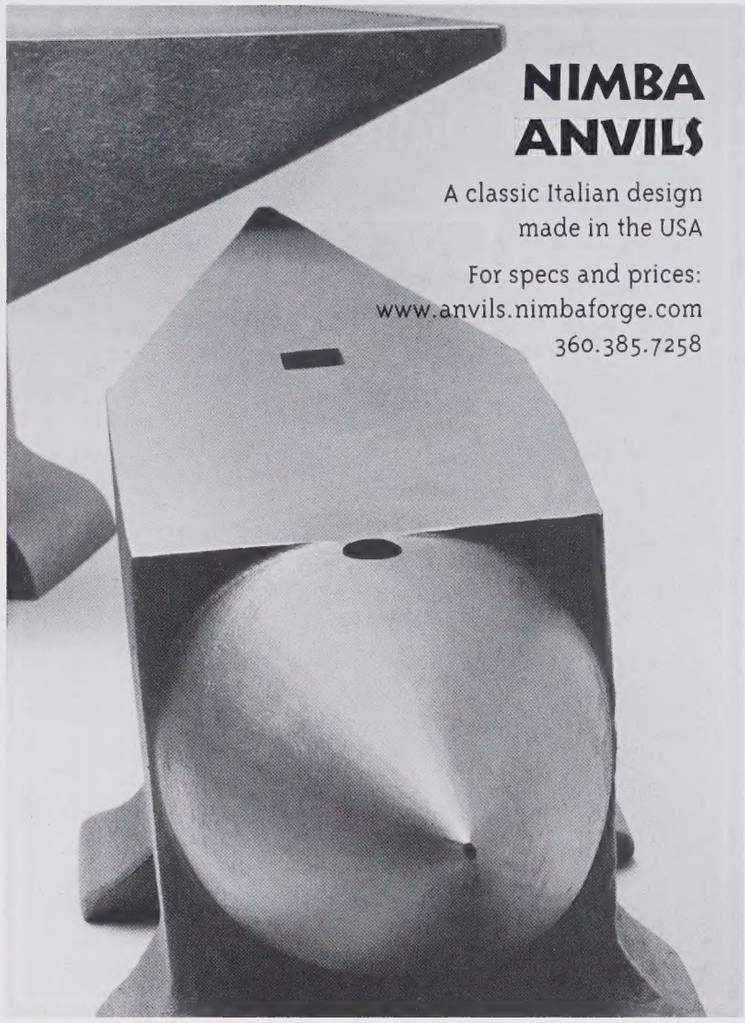

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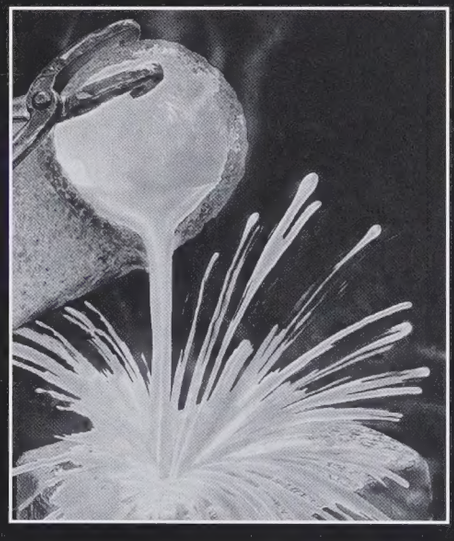

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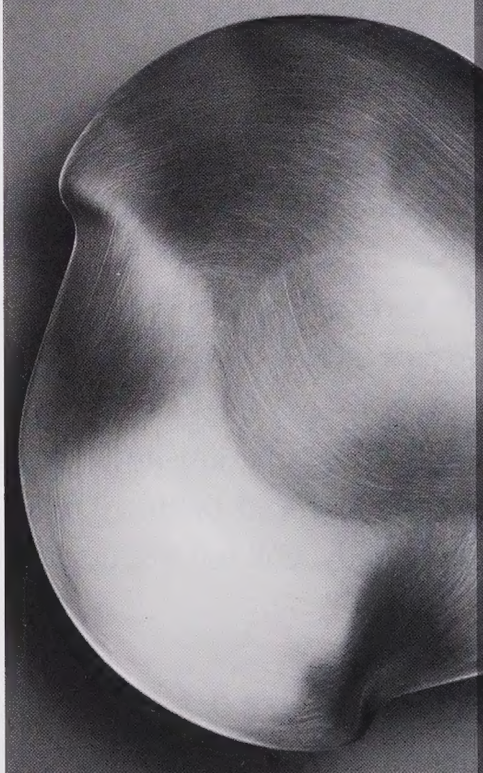

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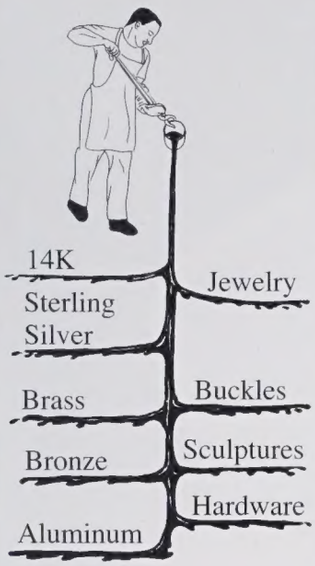

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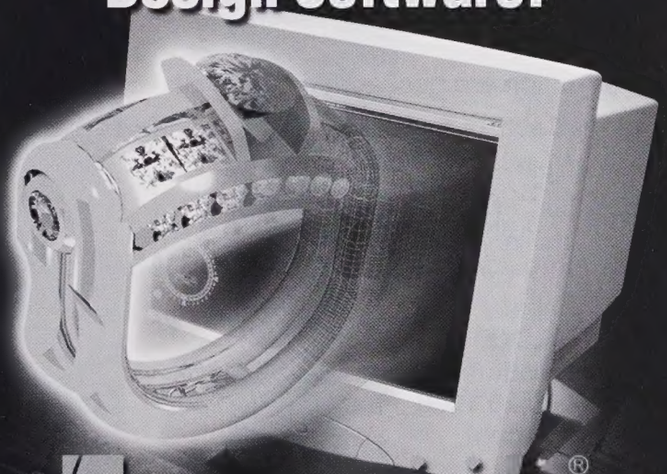

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The John Frei Custom Workbenches

Designed without compromise, these benches are the finest jewelers workbenches available. Built to be beautiful and sturdy, our solid wood workbenches are made in California by expert cabinet makers for jewelers, jewelry schools and jewelry workshops who demand quality tools. Standard features includes: stainless steel lined catch tray, two inch thick butcher block top, locking door with integral bur tray and two concealed security drawers plus six EZglide tool drawers. Available from stock or made to your specifications, in maple or oak. Shipped fully assembled.

Double Bank Custom Workbench
A larger work area with twice as many storage drawers as our standard John Frei workbench. Measures 62" wide by 26" deep and stands 38" tall. Shown in oak.

Bank of Drawers on Casters
These portable storage drawers are made by us to compliment the John Frei custom workbenches. Locking casters makes the bank of drawers easy to move around your shop. Shown in oak.
Measures: 18"W x 26"D x 38"H

John Frei Custom Workbench
Overall dimensions: Standard Design
49"W x 26"D x 38"H

Available Options
Simplified drawer lay outs for schools with individually locking drawers. Pull out layout board above locking door, pull out layout board beneath bench top, left hand bench, locking bank of drawers, custom finish/colors/or nude finish, block different locations, walnut or mahogany benches, GRS benchmate mounted in place of bench pin. Also double bank custom workbench. Contact us for your free full color benches selection guide. Or call for specialized design quote for your studio.

Detail *Four inch square hardened steel anvil block with bench pin, pull out tool tray with cut out for engravers block, two sturdy pull out arm rests, stain steel lined catch tray slides in and out.*

Detail *Locking top door with integral bur tray, two concealed security drawers, raised lip around bench top, two inch thick butcher block top.*

Two Station Custom Workbench
Popular for school and larger workshops. All the features of two separate John Frei workbenches with an added bank of drawers in the center. Shown in oak.
Overall dimension: 103"W x 26"D x 38"H.

Rolling Mill Specialist
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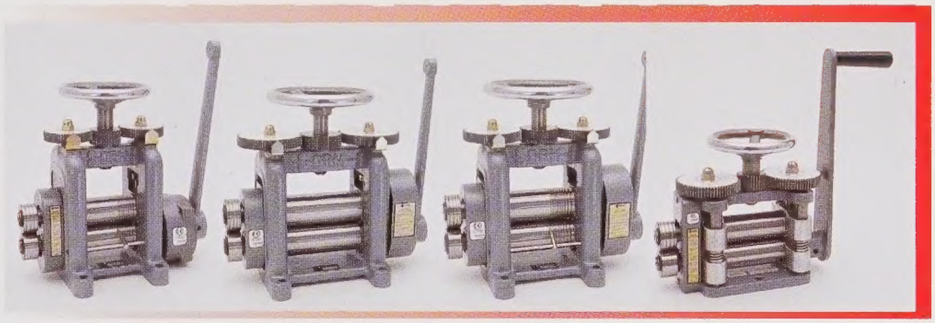


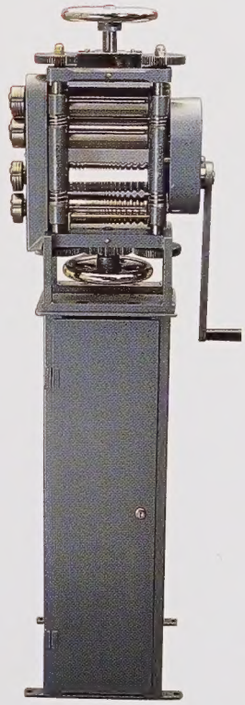
New Deluxe 100mm
Combo #128.108N
Flat #128.109N

New Deluxe 150mm
Combo #128.118N
Flat #128.119N

New Deluxe 130mm
Combo #128.130
Flat #128.132

Mini 100mm (pictured) **or Mini 80**
Combo 100 #128.100
Flat 100 #128.102

D2EX
120mm
With stand #128.115
Without stand #128.116



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I made model ships and airplanes when I was a kid. It trained me to sit there, and be patient. But I realized they were just kits. I wanted to be the one actually making the kits—building stuff with my hands.

I like silver because you don't have to be afraid to experiment with it. You can make it sculptural and heavy, but simple. Then you add some gold to it and some hand-cut stones, and all of a sudden it's not just silver anymore.

Designing for me is intuitive but deliberate. It's about color and basic form. I try to imagine something new in my work, something that hasn't been seen before. Once it materializes—and that's my favorite part!—I hope it's something simple and humble. I hope it's memorable.

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